



Learning and Teaching

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3.1 Learning and Teaching at UOW

UOW aims to create a learning and teaching culture distinguished by collaboration, innovation and excellence.

The University has a student-centred approach to learning and teaching. Highly professional academic and general staff are committed to encouraging students to learn, grow and achieve.

While UOW has developed in size and cultural diversity, it has retained the atmosphere of a smaller institution. The special UOW student experience is a product of personal contact, creative techniques and technology, and the social and physical spaces that inspire fellowship and the exchange of ideas.

The success of the UOW approach is demonstrated by its results in supporting student learning and preparing students for the challenges of future study and workplace environments. UOW has been ranked the nation's top university for educational experience and graduate outcomes for the last five years.¹

3.2 Planning for Quality

3.2.1 Strategic Directions

The UOW Strategic Plan 2005–2007² sets two major goals for learning and teaching: 'Excellence and innovation in teaching practice and programs' (Goal 1) and 'A University experience that gives all students the opportunity and skills to develop, grow and learn' (Goal 3).

UOW has had a comprehensive Learning and Teaching Plan since 1996. The current plan³ translates UOW's 2005–2007 strategic goals into action and guides the activities of faculties and professional units. The plan sets the following objectives:

1. Foster within our students the Attributes of a Wollongong Graduate
2. Support student learning
3. Offer quality teaching programs
4. Support quality teaching and professionalism

Over the three-year planning cycle, UOW plans to stabilise the growth in its student numbers and to focus more strongly on the quality of outcomes across all areas. In doing so, it is concerned to ensure that equity of access and opportunity is not diminished. An extensive, internal review of equity objectives⁴ in 2004 resulted in the development of a draft facilitating plan on student support and equity. To be finalised in 2005, the plan

PLAN

- 1 Good Universities Guides
- 2 University of Wollongong Strategic Plan 2005–2007, SM4
- 3 Learning and Teaching Plan 2005–2007, SM4
- 4 Identified in the 2004 Equity and Indigenous Education Strategies reports to DEST, SM23

represents a more strategic approach to managing student diversity and providing high level services and facilities.

3.2.2 Managing the Plan

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (PVC-A) provides executive leadership for the learning and teaching portfolio. The PVC-A chairs the University Education Committee (UEC).⁵ UEC reviews performance against planning objectives and reports to Academic Senate each year and conducts the end-of-cycle review of the Plan every three years (see The Institution, 2.2.3).

The Academic Senate has particular responsibility for course approval and deletion and for recommending or approving university-wide policies relating to the student experience and the administration of courses.

Faculties play a critical role in planning and policy implementation. In its Faculty Direction and Resource Plan, each faculty identifies its own objectives and strategies under the UOW Learning and Teaching Plan. Faculty Education Committees (FECs) oversee quality assurance and the implementation of university-wide educational policy, and monitor and review faculty-specific educational policy, practice and programs.⁶ Each FEC Chair is a member of UEC, providing an effective link between central University policy and decision-making and the corresponding faculty processes.

Professional units work together to coordinate initiatives and support the achievement of learning and teaching goals (see, for example, UOW's new learning management system, 3.3.1.5 below). The units provide access to excellent services and facilities that guide students through the cycle of their studies and enhance their experience at UOW (see Figure 3.1).

Other Teaching Sites

UOW has established other campuses in the Shoalhaven NSW and offshore in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), as well as education centres at Batemans Bay, Bega, Moss Vale, Loftus and the Sydney Business School. All operate within the PVC-A's learning and teaching portfolio.

5 See the UOW Committee Structure Diagram in Appendix D and detailed terms of reference of key committees in SM10

6 Faculty Education Committee Terms of Reference, www.uow.edu.au/governance/faculty/education.html

Case Study

Shoalhaven Campus and the Education Centres⁷

Performance reviews of UOW's Shoalhaven Campus and Education Centres were initiated with reports on the set up and the first year of operation. UOW student satisfaction surveys now provide for feedback from each site. Reviews of individual subjects have shown that, overall, the average marks are higher and the failure rates are lower than at the Wollongong campus. The reviews can be used by faculties to improve subject delivery. The online delivery system—eduStream (see 3.3.1.5)—was reviewed in 2004. A longitudinal study of students at the Shoalhaven and the Centres commenced with a report on the performance of commencing students in 2003 and 2004.

7 Shoalhaven Campus and Education Centres Operational Statement, SM24

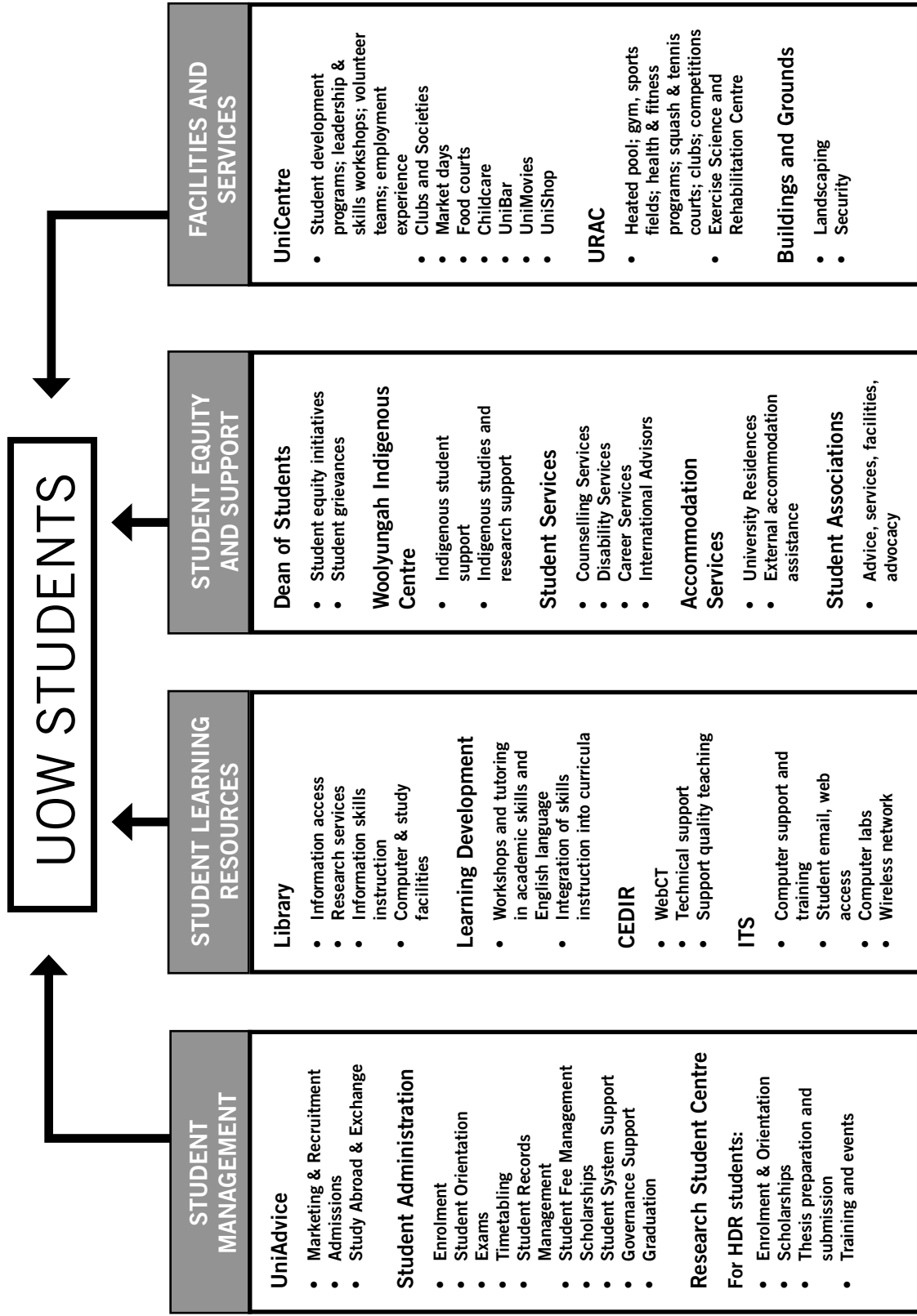


Figure 3.1 Services and Facilities Supporting Students

ACT

3.3 Ensuring Quality**3.3.1 Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Programs**

UOW's nine faculties offer a diverse range of specialised, quality programs designed to maximise student choices.⁸ These are each assessed over time to ensure that they are relevant and well designed and comply with academic standards. A clear, well-developed policy and quality framework promotes and safeguards student learning outcomes and facilitates improvement.

A strong research base informs teaching programs and promotes a climate of student inquiry. The Learning and Teaching Performance Report⁹ provides examples of good practice in promoting the teaching-research nexus.

3.3.1.1 Program Approval

Courses and subjects are developed in accordance with UOW strategic objectives and policies. They are required to meet key standards for discipline content, viability, and professional/industry requirements and to be attuned to developments in student preference. Faculties benchmark courses against other universities and professional/industry norms.

New course proposals are tested by External Course Appraisal Committees with professional or industry membership. In many cases courses are also accredited by industry bodies.¹⁰ New, amended and deleted course proposals are, in the majority of cases, vetted by the cross-disciplinary Academic Senate Standing Committee before they are forwarded to Academic Senate for approval. A fast-tracking policy¹¹ gives flexibility to expedite this process, under strict guidelines, where there is a strategic demand. A Course and Subject Approval Kit is available online to assist faculties to apply for course approval.¹²

A review of approval processes in 2003 resulted in significant improvements, reflected in the application forms, to ensure that adequate resources can be made available by the Library, CEDIR and ITS.

3.3.1.2 Program Review and Improvement

Academic units conduct regular course and subject reviews in accordance with approved procedures or as part of a formal accreditation process.¹³ The FECs play a key role in monitoring both course and subject reviews. New subjects are selected and audited annually by the UEC in a random audit process.¹⁴

A reassessment of review processes in 2004 resulted in the development of new guidelines requiring major courses to be reviewed within a five-year cycle in accordance with process and evaluation criteria.¹⁵ The guidelines allow some flexibility, recognising the varying demands on faculties. In the case of subject reviews, a new Subject Review Survey (trialled in 2004 and introduced in Summer Session 2004–2005) must be used to obtain feedback from students.

- 8 UOW Course Handbooks, www.uow.edu.au/handbook/yr2005/pdf/
- 9 Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004, SM25, p. 64
- 10 Table of Accredited Courses, SM26
- 11 www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/approval/fast-track.html
- 12 www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/approval/index.html
- 13 Table of Course Reviews 2001–2004, SM27
- 14 2004 Annual Subject Audit
- 15 UOW Quality Review Framework, Appendices A & B, SM14

In addition to the formal review process, subjects are continually evaluated and improved by subject coordinators in response to student feedback, self-appraisal and discipline-based needs or changes.

3.3.1.3 Graduate Attributes

The cultivation of the Graduate Attributes (Appendix N) is central to the UOW experience and prepares students to take contributing and, desirably, leading roles in the workplace and in society. The Graduate Attributes are acquired through the development of the following tertiary literacies—information, academic, computer, statistical and professional practices—which are detailed in the UOW Tertiary Literacy Policy.¹⁶

A number of processes support the systematic incorporation of the Graduate Attributes within course structures. For example, student learning outcomes for each subject must identify which attributes are being addressed¹⁷ and, from 2005, subject reviews must consider whether the attributes have been appropriately integrated.¹⁸ Professional units contribute to the development of Graduate Attributes, for example:

- Learning Development and CEDIR assist academic staff in the design of their courses and in developing teaching resources to support skills development.
- The Careers Service provides a suite of programs that foster connections between curricula, workplace learning programs and tertiary literacies.¹⁹ Pre and post surveys of students involved in a recent initiative *Univariate Illawarra*,²⁰ show that their Graduate Attributes rose from an average to a high rating as a result of working with local organisations to solve business problems.
- The Library manages one of the first compulsory introductory information literacy programs—ILIP—for coursework students²¹ and collaborates with academic staff to integrate information literacy skills into the curricula. An ILIP program for use in Dubai was completed in 2004 for delivery in 2005 and will progressively be made available to other offshore locations.
- In addition to ILIP, the Library offers generic and subject-specific information literacy workshops. Participation rates have grown to 14,000 students in 2004, an increase of 42% since 2002, and feedback has driven improvements such as more weekday sessions, weekend workshops and web-based tutorials for independent or remote access learning.

A comprehensive list of programs and activities directed at fostering the Graduate Attributes is provided in the Learning and Teaching Performance Report.²²

16 Tertiary Literacy Policy and Procedure, www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/tertiary_literacy_policy.html#7

17 Code of Practice—Teaching and Assessment, 4.1.1 and 5.1.2, SM28

18 UOW Quality Review Framework, SM14

19 www.uow.edu.au/careers/discover/index.html

20 www.uow.edu.au/careers/discover/UI.html

21 www.uow.edu.au/student/attributes/ilip/

22 Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004, SM25, pp. 12–17

Case Study**Teaching Strategies for Graduate Attributes Website²³**

In 2003, the Educational Strategies Development Fund (ESDF) funded the development of a website to promulgate examples of teaching strategies used by UOW academics to support students in achieving the Graduate Attributes.

The resulting website—Teaching Strategies for Graduate Attributes—was launched at the beginning of 2004. The site includes teaching ideas and case studies from all faculties and is intended to ‘grow’, with new strategies contributed by UOW staff and screened by CEDIR.

By November 2004, ongoing monitoring showed that the site had had between 400 and 800 visits a month.

3.3.1.4 Quality Assurance of Assessment

UOW is committed to professional standards of assessment to protect both the value of its programs and its relationship with students. Policies governing assessment practices and processes are well established and subject to ongoing review and improvement (guided largely by UEC’s Educational Policy Review Subcommittee).

Case Study**Senate Review of Assessment Practices and Processes**

In 2002, the Academic Senate launched a major Review of Assessment Practices and Processes (RAPP)²⁴ to provide a timely and comprehensive audit of current policies and procedures for protecting integrity and standards of student assessment, to test the level of compliance, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The resulting recommendations (submitted to Academic Senate in November 2002), led to the development in 2003 and 2004 of a raft of new and revised policies, including:

- new terms of reference for FECs, reinforcing their role in assuring the quality of educational programs;
- a revised Code of Practice—Teaching and Assessment defining more clearly quality assurance roles and responsibilities of academic staff;
- new Assessment Committee Guidelines, providing core standards for Faculty and Unit Assessment Committees when determining and declaring students’ session results;
- a new Code of Practice—Honours, governing the supervision and assessment of Honours students, and simplified methods for determining Honours grades; and
- new Academic Grievance Policies to provide a more transparent and consistent process for resolving student academic grievances.

²³ www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/attributes/

²⁴ Review of Assessment Practices and Processes (RAPP) Report to Academic Senate, Nov 2004, SM29; Report on Implementation of RAPP Recommendations, SM30

The implementation process included a thorough communication strategy to gain commitment and engagement throughout the University. A review of implementation initiated in 2004 is showing an increasingly systematic application of key assessment requirements.

Another important outcome of the implementation of the RAPP recommendations was the development, in 2004, of Good Practice Assessment Guidelines²⁵ by a working group of UEC, with reference to a wide range of good practice documents across the sector.²⁶ Policies on the use and assessment of group work will be developed in 2005.

3.3.1.5 Innovative Use of Technology

UOW won the University of the Year award for 'Preparing Graduates for an E-world' in 2000–2001. It has continued to be a sector leader, complementing its commitment to face-to-face teaching with an investment in the innovative use of technology.

With the establishment of new teaching sites in the region and overseas, innovation has been driven by UOW's commitment to providing the best possible learning experience for students, regardless of their location. UOW has capitalised on the rapid advances in communications and information technology. For example, the deployment of wireless technology on the main campus in mid 2004 allowed students to take advantage of flexible, immediate and interactive learning environments (with 676 access points, the roll-out created one of the largest wireless networks of any educational environment in Australia). Laptops and network cards are available for loan from the Library.

A centralised learning management and support system (currently WebCT) is managed by ITS and CEDIR.²⁷ A new, improved learning management system will be introduced in 2005. Other uses of technology in teaching practice include online teaching tools, audio recordings of lectures, video-conferencing between campuses, CD-ROMs, videos and animations.²⁸

Support and advice for teaching staff in the use of the technologies is provided, for example, by CEDIR 'e-learning' workshops as part of its staff development program. The Library also provides a centralised support service for the production and copyright management of electronic readings and other materials which are made available online via the Library catalogue. Developed and managed by UOW, a comprehensive Learning Designs²⁹ website (an Australian Universities Teaching Committee project) provides resources to assist academics across the sector with strategies for the flexible delivery of quality learning experiences for students.

25 www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/goodpractice/assessment/; www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/Best%20Practice%20Assessment.pdf

26 Including the benchmark document *Assessing Learning in Australian Universities— Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment*, CSHE (2002) www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/

27 <http://edsnet.cedir.uow.edu.au/delivery/>

28 See the *Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004*, for a comprehensive outline of activities supporting the innovative use of technology in teaching practice; SM25, pp. 61–63

29 www.learningdesigns.uow.edu.au/

Case Study

eduStream

eduStream³⁰ was established in 2003 in response to a significant and growing demand for the recording of lectures for students at South Coast teaching locations. The system records lectures and other learning materials for students to access online.

Around 30 hours of lectures were recorded each week in 2004, increasing to over 60 hours in Autumn Session 2005. Evaluations of the first year of operation showed that this technology is highly valued by the students.³¹ There is also a project to test the use of eduStream in UOW Dubai.

3.3.2 Quality Teaching

The success of quality teaching is dependent on inspirational, skilled and creative teaching staff. UOW encourages and supports them through professional development opportunities, grant schemes, teaching awards, teaching evaluations, and faculty initiatives supported by Faculty Education Committees. Teaching staff are also assisted by specialised professional units such as CEDIR, Learning Development, the Library and ITS.

Teaching quality is taken into account in career development interviews and plans, in probation and promotion deliberations (see Staff, 7.3.2.5), and in awards.

3.3.2.1 Professional Development

The Introduction to Tertiary Teaching (ITT)³² course was a forerunner in professional teaching development in Australia. Since its inception in 1992, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of academic development in tertiary teaching and a shift towards continual reflection on teaching practice.

ITT is offered through CEDIR to UOW academic teaching staff at no cost. Since 1994, all new staff have been required to participate unless they qualify for an exemption. Progressive reviews of ITT have resulted in improvements such as the introduction of a modular structure and a one-week intensive workshop program (replacing weekly workshops). Completion of the ITT course can be credited towards the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. The course is delivered in both Australia and Dubai.

A variety of other teaching-related development opportunities include a comprehensive program of short workshops, ranging from effective videoconferencing and working with technology, to improving face-to-face delivery and working with large classes.³³ Support for attendance at conferences and membership of professional networks also help to ensure that teaching practice is up-to-date and informed by discipline-based knowledge. Study leave may be used for teaching development.

30 <http://cedir.uow.edu.au/edustream/student/>

31 eduStream Progress Report: The First Year, December 2003

32 http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/services/serv_as_itt.html; recently renamed University Learning and Teaching (ULT)

33 See the Staff Development Calendar at <http://staff.uow.edu.au/cdu/calendar/index.html>

3.3.2.2 Reflective Practice and Improvement

UOW emphasises the importance of reflective practice in enhancing teaching skills. Among the resources available are formal student surveys of teaching (provided by CEDIR) which allow the teacher to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement.³⁴ Surveys are taken into consideration by the Promotions and Continuing Appointments Committee when judging performance. CEDIR also provides a free online evaluation environment (OLEE)³⁵ which allows teaching staff to design and administer their own subject surveys to evaluate all aspects of their teaching and the student experience.

A Learning and Teaching Colloquium has been held on the Wollongong campus each year since 2002. The 2006 Colloquium will be held at UOW Dubai.

3.3.2.3 Encouraging Innovation

Innovative approaches to teaching have been encouraged for many years by initiatives such as:

- The Faculty Service Agreements program,³⁶ which offers learning design and production support to faculties and other units to develop material for teaching purposes. Around 50 projects are undertaken each session, spread across all faculties and professional units.
- The Educational Strategies Development Fund (ESDF),³⁷ which annually funds educational developments under the Teaching and Learning Plan. See 3.3.1.3 and 4.3.4.2 for examples of improvements arising from ESDF projects.

3.3.2.4 Teaching Awards

The Vice-Chancellor confers annual awards for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning (OCTAL) in each faculty as well as an overall award.³⁸ The OCTAL scheme has been reviewed annually since 2002, resulting in an increase in the funding for the awards and the improvement of guidelines and processes to support applicants. The number of individual staff involved in applications rose from 19 in 2003 to 31 in the 2004 awards.

OCTAL recipients and nominees may be selected as applicants for the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT). All applicants are given intensive support and advice on how to highlight innovative teaching practice in their portfolios.

External awards, managed by professional associations and other groups are also sought as a means of acknowledging teaching excellence. For example, teaching staff have been recognised through the Australian College of Educators, Australian Council for Educational Leadership, Norman Baker Award for Excellence in Education and the French Ministry of Education (Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Academiques).

34 <http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/programs/tsse.html>

35 http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/services/serv_as_olee.html

36 <http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/programs/fsa.html>

37 http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/services/fund_esdf/pdf/esdf.pdf; ESDF Projects Funded 2003–2005, SM31

38 http://cedir.uow.edu.au/CEDIR/services/award_octal/

3.3.3 Student Access to UOW

3.3.3.1 Diversification of Student Intake

UOW's student profile has changed over recent years with increased numbers of high-achieving HSC students, a higher proportion of domestic students from southern Sydney and a significant percentage of international enrolments (24.5% of the onshore UOW student population in 2004).

3.3.3.2 Access Initiatives

In line with its strategic goals, UOW has adopted a range of access strategies to meet the needs of a diverse range of student applicants (see also Community Engagement, 6.3.3.1).

Special access opportunities and programs for HSC students include:

- Early Entry programs in Informatics and Science for high performing HSC students;
- Deans' Scholars and Advanced degrees for those attaining high UAI's;
- the School Principal's Recommendation Scheme (SPRS) which uses the recommendations from the school to help assess applicants for admission to programs at Shoalhaven Campus and Batemans Bay, Bega and Moss Vale Education Centres;
- the Faculty of Engineering Opportunity program, for students with lower UAI's or who did not take sufficient maths or science at school, which provides assistance with Mathematics, Chemistry and/or Physics; individual study programs; additional tutorials; access to a Science Bridging course.

As alternatives to HSC entry, UOW encourages access to tertiary education via:

- articulation with TAFE to assist entry for applicants who otherwise might not meet academic criteria (see Case Study below);
- an Educational Access Scheme to assist applicants who have experienced long-term disadvantage during Years 11 and 12;
- a University Access Program (all faculties) for economically disadvantaged prospective students through a 14-week (nine hours per week) academic skills and discipline preparation course with scholarships for tuition fees;
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alternative Admissions Program to provide Indigenous people, who may not have completed formal schooling, with the opportunity to undertake tertiary study;
- a range of preparation programs operated by Wollongong University College (WUC); and
- a new Special Tertiary Entry Program (STEP) to provide 50 Commonwealth-funded places a year for students from disadvantaged areas of the Illawarra to study at Wollongong University College and prepare for tertiary study.

TAFE Articulation**Case Study**

UOW was one of the first universities in NSW to document comprehensive articulation pathways for TAFE students. Approved credit transfer arrangements are updated regularly in collaboration with TAFE and posted on the UOW website.³⁹

UOW's excellent relationship with TAFE is particularly demonstrated by the co-location of teaching activities in custom-designed buildings at the Shoalhaven Campus and the Loftus Education Centre, and by a sharing of Library services and facilities.

A limited number of HECS places (25 for 2004) for postgraduate coursework students are awarded under equity and/or targeted criteria (primarily financial disadvantage).

3.3.3.3 Scholarships

UOW offers scholarships (in addition to Commonwealth scholarships) based on merit and/or equity criteria (see Community Engagement, 6.3.3.1). These include:

- a range of merit-based scholarships based on HSC performance, leadership and motivation;
- work-integrated scholarships;
- Equity and Merit Scholarships—awarded to students across all equity groups who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend university;
- General Residential Scholarships;
- Regional Residential Scholarships;
- Campus Chapter of UOW Alumni Equity and Merit Scholarships.

3.3.3.4 Introduction to UOW

UOW's highly personalised approach involves academic and general staff (and international agents) contacting potential students at careers markets and fairs, school visits and on-campus events such as Discovery Days for Year 12 students. Recruitment processes are managed and coordinated through UniAdvice, which also runs a Call Centre enquiry service.

Enrolment and orientation programs are continually improved to give students an immediate sense of belonging. For example, annual reviews of orientation, have resulted in the introduction of the sessional 'Ask Me' days, which provide students with the opportunity to have unanswered questions or issues dealt with before the deadline for changing enrolment.

³⁹ www.uow.edu.au/handbook/advancedstanding/

3.3.4 Student Support

As part of its student-centred approach, UOW has put in place resources, technology and other infrastructure to encourage and support students to manage their own learning. This strategy is supported by a range of policies, systems and processes and an empowering access to technology.

3.3.4.1 Administrative Systems and Procedures

The administrative relationship between university and student is managed by the Student Management Package (SMP), UOW's main student administrative system. An example of a modular, in-house initiative, SMP is keyed into the needs of both students and staff and allows each to control their work and study space with greater ease and with professional support where needed. The Student Online Services (SOLS) feature of SMP is the subject of a case study below.

SMP is complemented by administrative support and advice for students at service counters in the Academic Registrar's Division, the Research Student Centre and the faculties.

Key student administration processes and major student events are subject to ongoing formal and informal reviews, which have led to significant quality improvements. For example:

- An internal audit of admission processes conducted by Deloitte in 2004⁴⁰ identified the need for faster turnaround times for student applications and improvements in the tracking and control of student quotas. Improvements to these processes are currently being implemented by UniAdvice.
- A review of fee collection methods in 2002 resulted in online fee statements for students and improved communication, implementation of internet payment, and online HECS/PELS statements in 2003.
- Ongoing graduation reviews over the last two years have led to improvements in areas such as online applications, ticketing arrangements, and procedures on the day.

Case Study

Student Online Services (SOLS)

SOLS is a sophisticated, interactive administration and communication system progressively developed in-house since 1999 to support students through all phases of their university life. It is particularly valuable for students at remote sites.

Development of the SOLS interface has been a cooperative effort between ITS, ARD and students (who have been responsible for building most of the interfaces). Training on the use of SOLS is provided by ITS as part of the enrolment process.

40 Deloitte Internal Audit—'Student Admission Processes', 2004

Processes managed through SOLS include:

- Enrolment and withdrawal
- Tutorial bookings
- Creating an email account
- Sending official messages to students from Student Administration or lecturers/tutors (SOLSMail)
- Internet payment of fees
- Special consideration applications
- Annual progress reports for research students
- Election of student representatives to committees, boards or student associations
- Applications for graduation

A range of information is also available to students through SOLS, including assessment results, fees information, examination timetable and eligibility for graduation.

Throughout the development of SOLS, regular feedback from students has been sought through a variety of mechanisms, including surveys and forums. A permanent feedback mechanism was recently provided in SOLS for students to comment and rate all aspects of the system; the feedback is being monitored to identify areas for improvement.

3.3.4.2 Enhancing the Learning Experience

Staff commitment to enhancing student learning is a key feature of the educational experience at UOW.⁴¹ In addition, resources, technology and other infrastructure are carefully selected to fulfil the learning needs of students.

All full-time academic staff are available for consultation at least four hours a week over at least two days during session⁴² and, in practice, many academics have an open-door policy. Students also have email access to staff. Subject coordinators are available by email, telephone and video-conference at UOW's Australian locations.

Several professional units play a key role in supporting student learning either on an individual basis or by working with faculties, for example, to integrate skills instruction into curricula. Extra support is also provided for students with particular needs, including first year students, international students, Indigenous students, students with a disability and students from other equity groups. In addition, students can now independently access a wide range of online learning resources.

The University Library plays a crucial role in introducing students to learning tools and skills.⁴³ In addition to the collection, the Library offers a range of online services (e.g., online information skills tutorials, Email a Librarian and Chat to a Librarian), workshops

41 This focus is reflected in Objective 2 of the Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan 2005–2007, SM4

42 Code of Practice—Teaching and Assessment, section 3.5.7; SM28

43 www.library.uow.edu.au/

and ongoing, one-to-one advice (see The Institution, 2.3.7.3). The Library has achieved national recognition for the quality of its customer service. In a 2004 survey, 91% of respondents rated overall quality as good to excellent, an improvement of 9% since 2000.

Learning Development offers academic skills workshops, self-access learning resources and individual consultation. It also works with faculties to integrate tertiary literacies into the first year core curriculum. An online Higher Education Language Program (HELP) is being trialled in 2005 in the Faculties of Informatics and Commerce.

The Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004⁴⁴ provides a detailed listing of the programs and resources that support student learning, including relevant review and improvement processes.

Case Study

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (the UOW PASS Program)⁴⁵

The UOW PASS Program—based on the Supplemental Instruction model initially developed by the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)—was developed by Student Services to improve outcomes in subjects with higher than average failure rates. Initially piloted in the Faculty of Informatics in 2002, the program has been extended and improved on an ongoing basis and was supported by an ESDF Grant in 2003. PASS is currently used in a number of faculties with considerable success and supports around seven subjects and 1600 students each session.

The program targets subjects where students have previously experienced difficulties, with an emphasis on first year subjects. High-achieving, senior students are trained to act as peer leaders in a forum where students work together to consolidate understanding, reinforce key concepts and develop effective study strategies. From 2005, student leaders will receive academic credit in a new specially designed subject, Leadership and Peer Mentoring.

Evaluations show that participants perform at higher levels academically and are retained to second year at higher levels than non-participants. For example, the 2004 PASS program in Introductory Anatomy showed a reduction of the failure rate from 24% to 12%. The program has also had the beneficial effect of increasing interaction between international and domestic students in a collegial and non-competitive setting.

The UOW PASS program was in the final five in the institutional section of the 2003 AAUT Awards, and has been commended by the founder of the international program. A number of other universities have approached UOW for advice and/or training on how to conduct similar programs (including Macquarie University, Griffith University, University of Western Sydney and Victoria University). The UOW PASS coordinator has been officially requested by UMKC to undertake the role of national trainer in Australia and New Zealand.

44 Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004, SM25, pp. 28–38

45 www.uow.edu.au/student/services/pass/pass.html

3.3.4.3 Opportunities to Develop, Grow and Learn

A range of support services and resources are available to ensure that all students can enjoy the breadth of the student experience, whatever their circumstances. For example:

- All faculties offer advice through individual contact, student centres, websites and forums.
- The Dean of Students⁴⁶ administers an equity fund to assist students experiencing financial hardship and who meet equity criteria. Qualifying students receive partial assistance to pay their compulsory student body fee.
- Counselling Services⁴⁷ provide free and confidential counselling to students with personal, work or study-related difficulties.
- The Careers Service⁴⁸ conducts a range of programs and activities to help prepare students for the workplace and to improve their future employment prospects. In 2003–2004, a suite of Workplace Learning Programs was developed to complement existing academic offerings in supporting the development of the UOW Graduate Attributes.
- The Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (formerly the Aboriginal Education Centre)⁴⁹ supports Indigenous students on campus. Continuous assistance to Indigenous students for academic and personal needs is provided by a Student Support Officer, who is also available to liaise with faculties on behalf of students. Academic support is also provided by the Centre through the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS).
- Disability Services⁵⁰ offer a wide range of aids and programs for students with disabilities, including independent learning programs, audio-taping, note-taking and assistive technologies. Special Library support includes an Access Room equipped with assistive technology and special furniture. A 2004 review of assistive technology resources for students with disabilities benchmarked UOW activities with ANU, drawing on national experts, resulting in a professional training program and equipment upgrade.⁵¹
- A significant number of computer workstations and labs for student and class use are provided at all teaching locations. A pool of used computers donated by faculties is also available for loan to equity students.
- Accommodation Services⁵² provide comprehensive services, facilities and information to support UOW students. It also coordinates a benchmarking project for all student residences across Australia to ensure that cost structures are reasonable and comparable.
- The UniCentre⁵³ complements academic life with activities and facilities that develop the personal and social side of university life; for example, it provides a Bookshop and IT Centre; a child-care centre; support for clubs and societies, and diverse food outlets. The UniCentre's Centre for Student Development⁵⁴ is facilitating a three-year leadership curriculum for first year students beginning in 2005; it will call on collaboration from staff and postgraduate students across UOW.
- The University Recreation and Aquatic Centre⁵⁵ allows all Wollongong students to take advantage of high quality and low-cost recreational and sporting facilities.

46 www.uow.edu.au/student/services/dos/

47 www.uow.edu.au/student/services/cs/

48 www.uow.edu.au/careers/

49 www.uow.edu.au/aec/

50 www.uow.edu.au/student/services/ds/

51 Allan, T. (2004). Audit of Assistive Technology Resources for Students with Disabilities

52 www.uow.edu.au/about/accommodation/

53 <http://unicentre.uow.edu.au/>

54 <http://unicentre.uow.edu.au/csd/>

55 www.uow.edu.au/urac/index.html

- The Student Associations⁵⁶ offer various information, support and advocacy services to students.

The above services are tailored to the needs of students at the Shoalhaven campus and the Education Centres.⁵⁷

The beautiful physical environment of the main campus (maintained by the Buildings and Grounds Division) offers both reflective and communal spaces for study and interaction. It is highly regarded by students, staff and visitors alike, as reflected in comments received through feedback mechanisms.

3.3.4.4 Student Rights and Responsibilities

The clear articulation of student rights and responsibilities is critical to the maintenance of a supportive learning environment. UOW has a range of policies setting out the responsibilities of students and staff which are communicated to students in a variety of ways, including through:

- centrally-administered student pages of the UOW website;⁵⁸
- the Student Guide, now included in the UniCentre Student Diary available to all students;
- faculty web pages and notice boards;
- workshops on plagiarism and acknowledgement practice.

Over the past two years, the major review of assessment policies and procedures has clarified the rights and responsibilities of students (see 3.3.1.4). In addition, student grievance and discipline procedures have been substantially rewritten to provide more consistent and transparent processes.⁵⁹ Under the new procedures, faculties play a critical role in the early handling of student complaints and academic misconduct (such as plagiarism), with opportunities for referrals or appeals in circumstances set out in the relevant policies.

Students are encouraged to seek to resolve grievances informally with the person concerned before initiating formal grievance resolution procedures. The Academic Grievance Policy is based on a staged process which encourages resolution at faculty level but provides higher level review when required. The Dean of Students systematically tracks grievances and prepares a report for the PVC-A who can initiate any necessary improvements to policy and procedures.

Students play an important role in the central decision-making processes at UOW and are represented on the University Council, Academic Senate and key Senate committees. Student representatives are included on key faculty and professional unit committees. The student associations are also consulted during the development of policies affecting student rights and responsibilities.

56 www.uow.edu.au/student/associations.html

57 See the Shoalhaven Campus and Education Centres Operational Statement, SM24

58 www.uow.edu.au/student/rights.html; www.uow.edu.au/student/complaints/

59 Academic Grievance Policy (Coursework and Honours Students) and Academic Grievance Policy (HDR Students) implemented in 2004, SM32; Rules for Student Conduct and Discipline www.uow.edu.au/handbook/generalrules/student_discipline_rules.html

3.4 Evaluation and Review

Progress towards meeting the broad objectives in the Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan is assessed annually by the UEC using the Plan's performance indicators. The results also guide the development of UEC priorities for the following year.

Positioning in the sector is monitored through DEST reports⁶⁰ and informally through the Good Universities Guide and external award structures.

3.4.1 Monitoring Mechanisms

UOW student outcomes, such as retention and participation rates, are closely monitored and compared to state and national averages. The latest DEST report⁶¹ on student outcomes places UOW first for student retention and graduate full-time employment and among the top five Australian universities for graduates proceeding to further full-time study and graduate starting salaries.

Feedback from students is systematically obtained with a view to improving the quality of the teaching, programs and student services and the policies and procedures underpinning them. For example, the Strategic Planning Unit conducts a number of annual student surveys:

- the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS);
- the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ);
- the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ); and
- internal Student Satisfaction Surveys.

It also conducts various other one-off surveys as required (e.g., accommodation services, standard of teaching facilities).

Members of the teaching staff have access to a number of teaching and subject evaluation tools provided by CEDIR (see 3.3.2.2). The COGNOS cubes (see The Institution, 2.4) have also introduced a valuable tool for accessing and evaluating statistical information.

Professional and employer groups provide feedback to faculties through the course development and review process, participation on faculty/school committees and other local feedback mechanisms.

Feedback is obtained by professional and other units (e.g., the Library, Student Services, ITS, UniCentre) through regular surveys, focus groups and a variety of suggestion mechanisms that are used to continuously improve services. There was a comprehensive review of Learning and Teaching Performance in 2004.⁶²

60 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio: University of Wollongong, DEST, 2004, SM33

61 Strategic Analysis and Evaluation Group: Technical Note 1, DEST, November 2004, SM34

62 Learning and Teaching Performance Report 2004, SM25

3.4.2 Evaluation—Quality of Programs

Evaluation strategies for subjects and courses have been embedded in UOW procedures. They have recently been reviewed and improved in the development of the new Quality Review Framework. Well-developed assessment practices and processes are also in place, as noted in 3.3.1.4.

CEQ results show that UOW students have higher than average levels of satisfaction with the quality of their programs (see Appendix O). UOW performed better than the national average in most discipline areas. Course review continues to support quality teaching programs and the new framework for course and subject reviews will ensure that UOW offerings remain up-to-date and relevant to industry and professional needs.

Of those graduates available for work, the proportion obtaining full-time employment has been sustained at high levels over the last several years at around 93%, well above the national average (see Appendix O). The proportion of graduates continuing with further tertiary studies is around 29%, slightly above the national average (see Appendix O).

A user survey of WebCT is conducted each session to gather information on its effectiveness in supporting learning and teaching.⁶³

In 2004, an e-Teaching Project team—involving ITS, CEDIR, the University Library, ARD and faculties—drafted a strategic plan for e-teaching and e-learning. The team also evaluated new learning management systems to improve the quality of the subjects that blend online and face-to-face teaching and learning. After an extensive investigation, UOW selected a new e-learning system for implementation in 2005. A cross-unit project will also investigate content management and institutional repository systems.

UOW has a clear framework for fostering its Graduate Attributes and provides appropriate support to academics to integrate their development within the curriculum via, for example, the teaching strategies website. However, further work is required in some discipline areas to ensure appropriate and systematic integration of relevant teaching strategies. Performance indicators on Graduate Attributes within subject outlines have been included in the current Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan and faculties are being asked to report on outcomes.

Future Challenges

The provision of quality teaching programs is an ongoing priority and UOW will be working on the following improvements in 2005 and beyond:

- Support for faculties to implement the new Quality Review Framework.
- Improved monitoring of student performance and satisfaction across teaching locations.
- Migration to the new learning management system and developing a more strategic approach to e-teaching and e-learning.

63 <http://edsnet.cedir.uow.edu.au/delivery/htm/wuss.htm>

3.4.3 Evaluation—Quality of Teaching

UOW's culture of quality teaching is supported and encouraged through a range of programs, grants, awards and staff practices. Evidence of academic staff commitment is demonstrated by their high levels of participation in:

- teaching surveys, with nearly 300 UOW academic staff taking part each year;
- staff development workshops, with academic participation rising from 374 attendances in 2000 to over 1400 in 2003 (see Appendix O);
- an Online Evaluation Environment (OLEE) which provides academic staff with an online or paper-based subject survey which can be tailored to evaluate all aspects for teaching, subject content and student experiences. Usage grew from 63 to 78 surveys between 2003 and 2004, with further growth in use anticipated for 2005;
- the V-C's annual OCTAL awards, with 31 applications put forward for the 2004 awards.

Future Challenges

UOW continues to seek ways to improve the quality of its learning and teaching practice, programs and support. For example, UOW is looking to:

- Extend the compulsory formal UOW induction for casual academic staff to include classroom training programs.
- Evaluate the emphasis on teaching performance in academic promotions with a view to developing improved guidelines for promotions committees.
- Provide a better mechanism to assess and act upon subject evaluation data using the new compulsory subject survey.

3.4.4 Evaluation—Student Access

Appendix F shows that UOW is maintaining rates of access across the range of equity groups with some increases.

Overall, UOW retention and success ratios tend to be above state and national averages for most equity groups, with the exception of students from rural and isolated areas and domestic non-English speaking background students. Some of the results for Women in Engineering are less positive; rates for Women in Higher Degrees by Research are stable.

Access and participation rates for lower socio-economic students have been declining over the last four years and current levels are below sector average. Indigenous student access and participation ratios were slightly below the sector average in 2003, but close to the state levels. UOW has performed better than the sector and state averages on

retention and success rates for its Indigenous students in three of the last four years, although student numbers are small.

The draft student equity and support plan, to be finalised in 2005, will provide a more strategic approach to managing student diversity and providing high level services and facilities.

An Educational Strategies Development Fund project will be funded to review the access programs in 2005 and recommend improvements.

Future Challenges

The University has a strong record of achievement in supporting students from equity target groups to achieve the University goals and to gain a quality university experience. The main challenges include the need to:

- Maintain multiple entry pathways to UOW for students from equity target groups, in the current competitive environment.
- Ensure quality teaching and learning support for students from equity groups at all campuses and Education Centres.
- Promote tolerance, acceptance and inclusiveness as the student population becomes increasingly diverse.
- Embed the student equity plan at faculty and unit levels.

3.4.5 Evaluation—Student Support

Results of the 2003-4 annual survey of currently enrolled students⁶⁴ indicate that UOW continues to be a student-centred university which provides students with a supportive environment in which to 'develop, grow and learn'. Key survey results include the following:

- 88.5% were either 'very satisfied' or 'generally satisfied' with their overall student experience at UOW.
- 74.3% agreed or strongly agreed that UOW provides a supporting environment, providing help when required.
- 78.5% agreed or strongly agreed that, overall, they were satisfied with the quality of their course (an increase from 71% in 2000).
- 72% of 2003 graduates (responding to the Course Experience Questionnaire) strongly agreed with the statement: 'Overall I was satisfied with the quality of my course'.
- Among current students, overall satisfaction with course quality increased from 65% in 1998 though to 82% in 2001 and 78.5% in December 2003.

Future Challenges

Appendix F shows that the University is maintaining performance levels across equity groups with positive outcomes and completion rates in some areas. Initiatives such as the PASS program, for example, are showing strong potential for assisting students with their transition to university. Challenges include:

- Improving outcomes in subjects or discipline areas where students have a lower than average level of success. In 2005 UOW will continue to investigate ways to improve current programs, pilot new programs (e.g., the Faculty Teaching and Learning Scholarships Program through CEDIR) and intensify central support.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive student equity and support plan which is integrated into faculty and unit planning.
- Building on the UOW student experience at all UOW teaching sites.
- Improving feedback to students regarding student survey outcomes.
- Improving communication with/between faculties and units with regard to the use of student surveys for review of programs and services.

3.5 Priorities for Action

IMPROVE

UOW aims to work towards its 2005–2007 strategic goals for learning and teaching and the student experience by undertaking the following plan of action:

Current Priorities, 2005

- Enhance the continuous review and improvement of courses and subjects through:
 - the new review guidelines (under the Quality Review Framework); and
 - improvements to survey/statistical analysis, access and feedback.
- Implement and promote the new Learning Management System.
- Complete and introduce a comprehensive student equity and support plan.
- Target and improve equity group access and participation through an Educational Strategies Development Fund (ESDF) project.
- Review and strengthen strategies to inculcate Graduates Attributes.
- Strengthen the system for tracking student grievances and outcomes and identify improvements to practices.
- Review and strengthen group work assessment policy.

Longer Term Priorities, 2005–2007

- Improve teaching development opportunities for casual academic staff through a new teaching skills development program for casuals which is currently being piloted by CEDIR.
- Review operation of the new Learning Management System.
- Review the Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan (in 2007).