School of Psychology

Teaching & Learning Committee

Minutes of the meeting: 30 July 2010

Present
Hayley Hutchison
Andrea Loftus
Shayne Loft
Geoff Hammond (Chair)

Apology
Vance Locke

1 Chair’s report

• The Chair welcomed Hayley, the Manager of Student Services, who had been co-opted to the Committee.
• The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching & Learning was planning to change the SPOT survey to a small set of fixed items and a second small set of items that could be changed from time to time to assess Faculty or University priorities. It was also intended that SPOT assess the unit only (like SURF) and not individual teaching. The Faculty T&L Committee had argued that this change was not desirable.
• The School had received feedback from the Interim Boards of Studies on its unit, major, and honours proposals. Three criticisms were made: (1) that the major structure did not conform to the 2+2+4 structure (this a result of mixed level 2 and Level 3 units); (2) that the Honours structure did not conform to a 50/50 coursework/research split; and (3) that although communication skills were assessed throughout the major they were not explicitly taught.

2 Scaling scores from multiple-choice exams

The purpose of scaling scores from multiple-choice exams so that they mapped onto the grading scale was discussed. Since Vance, who was unable to attend, had submitted a comment, the discussion was held over to the next meeting.

3 Student evaluation of mixed (Level 2/3) units

The Committee had SURF ratings of the four units that have run since the mixed-level classes were introduced. The Chair noted that the issue of mixed classes had been raised by the Student Liaison group and that some negative comments had been made raised in the SPOT survey of 2217. Two of the units had been rated highly whereas the other two had been rated below-average. It was acknowledged that student dissatisfaction was a considerable risk to enrolments and hence income. Several points were raised in discussion:

• The effect of mixed levels was evident in laboratories and tutorials; some third-year students felt that they weren’t able to apply the skills they were learning in 3301 and that they were being held back.
• Some topics might be suited to mixed classes whereas others might depend more on a progression of learning from Level 2 to Level 3.
• The trial of explicitly mixing Level 2 and Level 3 students in small groups in 2217 had not been successful, and it might be better to segregate the different levels.

The Chair agreed to get more information and report to the next meeting.

4 Mid-year honours entry

The Chair reported information gathered since the last meeting:

• There were nine applicants for mid-year entry this year; three clearly made the cut (including one with an outstanding academic record).
• All other Schools in the Faculty offer a two-semester Honours program for mid-year entrants.
• University mid-year enrolments were increasing and it was likely that applications for mid-year entry to Honours would increase.
• CRICOS mandated a two-semester program and the School would have to withdraw if it retained a three-semester program for mid-year entrants.

5 Printed unit material

After a brief discussion it was agreed that on-line unit material only should be provided. This would save photocopying and avoid and help avoid conflicting sources of information.

Recommendation to the Head of School: that undergraduate unit material be provided only on-line.

6 Next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 3 pm on Friday 20 August.

7 Other business

There was no other business.