

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
Division of Environmental and Life Sciences

TEACHING AND LEARNING
ENHANCEMENT PLAN

2002-2005

Strategic Directions

MISSION

The mission of the Division of Environmental and Life Sciences in teaching and learning is to advance teaching and scholarship in the Division to the highest possible standards for the benefit of our students, the university and the wider Australian and international communities.

To facilitate this mission, the Division of Environmental and Life Sciences has established a Teaching and Learning Committee

GOALS

1. To see the Division of Environmental and Life Sciences recognised as a premier teaching and learning group of environmental and life scientists within Australia, and one of the international community's leading establishments.
2. To provide the highest quality education and training to our undergraduate, honours and postgraduate students.

Achievement of these teaching and learning goals is set within the context of four broad categories of Divisional concern:

1. Students
2. Teaching staff
3. Courses/degree programs, and
4. Transition phases

THE STUDENTS

GOAL 1

To produce graduates who are recognised as having received the highest quality education and training at undergraduate, honours and postgraduate levels.

OUTCOMES:

- 1.1 The attraction and retention of a larger proportion of students admitted to the University including those with higher UAI entry levels;
- 1.2 The development of generic skills, professional competencies, and all-round ability to be lifelong learners;
- 1.3 The recognition of and attention to student diversity through programming of learning activities and assessment tasks;
- 1.4 The equitable and effective treatment and education of "at risk" students;

- 1.5 Putting in place a scheme to provide on-going academic advice and mentoring of students in the Division;
- 1.6 Application of access and equity issues to all students.

STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Ensure the development of training in generic skills for all students, as well as specific skills training relevant to their particular subject areas;
- 1.2 Institute a system of regular quality reviews of all teaching programs to ensure that program contents, structures and assessment are of the highest standard consistent with the production of competent graduates;
- 1.3 Maintain a system for the constant review of units offered with regard to relevance, viability and duplication;
- 1.4 Conduct graduate destination and program satisfaction surveys;
- 1.5 Where applicable, survey employers' attitudes to unit objectives, content and structure, as well as program outcomes;
- 1.6 Encourage staff to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning and to apply for CPD and CAUT teaching develop grants to that end;
- 1.7 Ensure staff conduct regular student evaluations of unit design and teaching performance.

THE TEACHING STAFF

GOAL 2

To cultivate an academic environment in which teaching is valued as a scholarly endeavour that is encouraged, supported and rewarded.

OUTCOMES

- 2.1 Attracting, developing and retaining high quality staff in learning and teaching;
- 2.2 The recognition and rewarding of innovative teaching;
- 2.3 The inculcation of reflective practices on approaches to teaching and the use of academic portfolios as a positive tool in progress towards teaching development;
- 2.4 The development of a clear and recognised nexus between teaching and research;
- 2.5 A culture of teaching skills development;
- 2.6 A scholarly approach to teaching and learning.

STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Encourage staff to attend staff development courses provided by CPD;
- 2.2 Institute staff "teaching and learning" seminars;
- 2.3 Maintain a teaching mentoring system for new staff taking up their first teaching appointment;
- 2.4 Development among all staff of academic portfolios as mechanisms to record academic career events to use as evidence of the quality of their teaching and learning achievements.

COURSES AND DEGREE PROGRAMS

GOAL 3

To implement a Division-wide system for improving course and subject quality.

STRATEGIES

- 3.1 To use continuous course improvements processes by:
 - supporting incremental changes to courses and units;
 - implementing regular cycles of in-depth reviews of curricula and unit contents;
 - monitoring and reviewing the quality of courses and units against courses and units offered nationally and internationally in each subject area, including feedback from professional bodies, public and private sector employers and graduates.
- 3.2 For each curriculum area, identify and map those segments of courses and units which develop capacities for desired graduate attributes.

OUTCOMES

- 3.1 The emplacement of mechanisms or sets of mechanisms to judge the success of each strategy;
- 3.2 The establishment of teaching development grants within the Division to supplement teaching development at University level;
- 3.3 Flexible delivery of units to sustain maximum opportunities for all students.

STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Encourage the University to emphasise teaching performance criteria in staff appointments and promotions;
- 3.2 Seek additional funds from the University to overcome present shortfalls in computing, library serial and other facilities;
- 3.3 Encourage flexible delivery through attention to alternative modes and forms of delivery through web-based and other forms of electronic teaching along with external student orientated forms of teaching.

TRANSITION PHASES

GOAL 4

To provide for, prepare and support students at all transition phases in their entry to university, change in levels of learning, and the undergraduate-honours-postgraduate transitions.

OUTCOMES

- 4.1 For first-year students, confidence in their ability to handle the transition from the secondary school teacher-student relationship to the greater independence and self-help tertiary environment;
- 4.2 Facilitate students' skills in independent critical learning;
- 4.3 An interactive relationship with the academic staff teaching – student learning process;
- 4.4 Skills in appropriate use of information and information technology.

STRATEGIES

- 4.1 To initiate, continue to provide and evaluate appropriate induction activities including high quality advice on course/unit and subject selection and activities which would facilitate social interaction as part of the learning process;
- 4.2 Provide opportunities to facilitate students' skills in independent critical learning;
- 4.3 Prepare students for relevant and appropriate use of information and information technology;
- 4.4 Initiate, listen and respond to feedback from undergraduate and postgraduate students in terms of their experiences during transition phases.