Summary and Recommendations

This paper forms a part of the Review of Course Structures and has been prepared by the Working Party on Postgraduate Coursework Programs. The paper contains the following sections:

Terms of Reference

Part A: UWA and Postgraduate Coursework Programs
2. Characteristics of postgraduate coursework students.
3. UWA in comparative perspective.
   a. Inter-university comparisons.
   b. Go8 comparisons.
   c. UWA and Western Australian Universities.
   d. UWA enrolments.
   e. Promises of things to come?
4. Good Practice in Postgraduate Coursework Education.
5. Recommendations.

Part B: Course Structures and Related Matters
1. Definitional issues.
2. Admission requirements.
3. Length of courses.
4. Relationship with Honours and undergraduate programs.
5. Structure of postgraduate courses.
6. Nexus between onshore and offshore programs.
7. Role of professional associations.
8. Recognition of prior learning, credits and substitutions.
9. Role and practice of articulated programs.
10. Equity and access.
12. Research linkages.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1
That UWA’s Strategic Plan explicitly acknowledge the role of postgraduate coursework programs in adding to the university’s diversity, reach and mission.

Recommendation 2
That UWA’s OPP establish stretch targets for postgraduate coursework enrolments.
Recommendation 3
(a) That, other than in circumstances where there are social benefits in offering a particular course, postgraduate course should become financially viable over the medium term.
(b) That, to assist in new courses become financially viable:
   iii. faculties continue to provide details of expected enrolments and in order to ensure the financial viability of postgraduate courses;
   iv. the Terms of Reference for the review of fee paying courses explicitly include the evaluation of the financial viability of such courses;
   v. overhead and infrastructure charges on new courses be phased in over a period of time as appropriate; and
   vi. UWA funding models provide positive encouragement for such courses.

Recommendation 4
That faculties make provision for part-time graduate coursework students through consideration of (a) evening and week-end classes, (b) intensive and block modes of teaching, and (c) mixed modes of teaching.

Recommendation 5
That Student Services and faculties/schools provide effective services for postgraduate students, who are predominantly either international students or part-time students.

Recommendation 6
That faculties and schools ensure that appropriate teaching and learning methods are employed in professional graduate courses.

Recommendation 7
That faculties explore with professional and industry bodies any opportunities that might be provided by the Australian Government’s move to extend Youth Allowance and Austudy to students enrolled in Masters by coursework programs.

Recommendation 8
That faculties actively seek industry sponsorship of professional graduate programs.

Recommendation 9
That, in their recruiting, faculties consider the needs of postgraduate teaching. This may include persons with relevant professional experience in addition to academic qualities.

Recommendation 10
That faculties explore the use of adjunct/clinical personnel in postgraduate teaching.

Recommendation 11
That Schools benchmark their professional graduate courses against those of appropriate institutions on a regular basis.
Recommendation 12
That the best practice principles cited in Section 4 of this paper be used regularly as a checklist when reviewing existing postgraduate courses or considering the establishment of new courses.

Recommendation 13
That the admissions requirements for all courses be transparent and easily understood by applicants and administrators.

Recommendation 14
That, where there is a sequence of (upward) course articulation:
   (a) the higher award acknowledge such articulation as one of the grounds for admission;
   (b) the criteria for articulation be clearly enunciated and applied; and
   (c) faculties consider using the lower qualification as an enabling course to help applicants meet the admission criteria of the higher course(s).

Recommendation 15
(a) That Masters degrees of this university require the equivalent of at least two years of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree or the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the Bachelor Honours of four years (or longer) degree.
(b) That graduate diploma courses of this university require the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree.
(c) That graduate certificates of this university require the equivalent of one half year of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree.

Recommendation 16
That faculties currently teaching 8-point units (or multiples thereof) give consideration to adopting 6-point units (or multiples thereof).

Recommendation 17
That postgraduate students not normally be required to enroll in undergraduate units, other than at Level 4.

Recommendation 18
That existing postgraduate courses consisting entirely or predominantly of undergraduate units not be designated as postgraduate courses.

Recommendation 19
(a) That faculties give consideration to providing conversion programs in areas of perceived demand.
(b) That, where provision is made for a number of related conversion programs, faculties
give consideration to generic structures as the vehicle for these programs.

Recommendation 20
(a) That the Review of Course Structures Working Party on Framework and Definition of
Degrees consider the awarding of coursework masters degrees with distinction and
high distinction.
(b) That any decision resulting from (a) be prescribed by University General Rules.

Recommendation 21
That UWA continue to ensure that the same standards and rules are applied to both
onshore and offshore courses.

Recommendation 22
That, in their deliberations with professional associations concerning the content and
requirements of courses, faculties ensure that UWA norms are maintained.

Recommendation 23
That faculties consult with appropriate professional associations and industry
representatives regarding their postgraduate courses.

Recommendation 24
That faculties continue to recognize prior learning in postgraduate coursework
programs.

Recommendation 25
That, though work experience may constitute grounds for admission to courses in part or
in whole, such experience should not provide grounds for credit.

Recommendation 26
That credit should not be provided on a unit-for-unit basis in postgraduate courses for
studies undertaken in previously completed undergraduate courses (other than at fourth
year level).

Recommendation 27
That, in the case of articulated courses, the relevant rules
(a) indicate what must be achieved for upward articulation; and
(b) provide for downward articulation, that is explicitly provide for the award of
the lower qualification in the event that a student is unable to complete the
higher qualification but meets the requirements of the lower qualification.

Recommendation 28
That, where students enroll directly into a masters degree that provides for the award of
a graduate diploma for those students not able to complete the degree, the rules specify
(a) that the graduate diploma articulates with the masters degree;
(b) the requirements for the award of the graduate diploma; and
(c) that the diploma is not a direct entry program.

Recommendation 29
That Student Services consider mechanisms for meeting the needs of postgraduate coursework students.

Recommendation 30
(a) That, in any jointly badged courses involving UWA, the students must be enrolled by UWA in accordance with its admissions requirements.
(b) That, in any jointly badged courses, students must undertake at least 50% of the work through UWA in order to be awarded a UWA degree.
(c) That, in any joint courses, those students undertaking less than 50% of the work through UWA be awarded a degree ‘in association’ with, rather than by, UWA.
(d) That, in any joint courses, students must undertake a part of the course through UWA in order for any UWA recognition to be afforded the award in terms of (b) or (c).

Recommendation 31
That the Research Committee of this University consider a distinct designation for research masters degrees.
Recommendation 20
(a) That the Review of Course Structures Working Party on Framework and Definition of Degrees consider the awarding of coursework masters degrees with distinction and high distinction.
(b) That any decision resulting from (a) be prescribed by University General Rules.

Recommendation 21
That UWA continue to ensure that the same standards and rules are applied to both onshore and offshore courses.

Recommendation 22
That, in their deliberations with professional associations concerning the content and requirements of courses, faculties ensure that UWA norms are maintained.

Recommendation 23
That faculties form advisory boards constituted by appropriate professional associations and industry representatives to advise on postgraduate courses.

Recommendation 24
That faculties continue to recognize prior learning in postgraduate coursework programs.

Recommendation 25
That, though work experience may constitute grounds for admission to courses in part or in whole, such experience should not provide grounds for credit.

Recommendation 26
That credit should not be provided on a unit-for-unit basis in postgraduate courses for studies undertaken in previously completed undergraduate courses (other than at fourth year level).

Recommendation 27
That, in the case of articulated courses, the relevant rules
(c) indicate what must be achieved for upward articulation; and
(d) provide for downward articulation, that is explicitly provide for the award of the lower qualification in the event that a student is unable to complete the higher qualification but meets the requirements of the lower qualification.

Recommendation 28
That, where students enroll directly into a masters degree that provides for the award of a graduate diploma for those students not able to complete the degree, the rules specify
(d) that the graduate diploma articulates with the masters degree;
(e) the requirements for the award of the graduate diploma; and
(f) that the diploma is not a direct entry program.
Recommendation 29
(a) That UWA create scholarships for full-time postgraduate coursework students.
(b) That Student Services consider mechanisms for meeting the needs of postgraduate coursework students.

Recommendation 30
(e) That, in any jointly badged courses involving UWA, the students must be enrolled by UWA in accordance with its admissions requirements.
(f) That, in any jointly badged courses, students must undertake at least 50% of the work through UWA in order to be awarded a UWA degree.
(g) That, in any joint courses, those students undertaking less than 50% of the work through UWA be awarded a degree ‘in association’ with, rather than by, UWA.
(h) That, in any joint courses, students must undertake a part of the course through UWA in order for any UWA recognition to be afforded the award in terms of (b) or (c).

Recommendation 31
That the Research Committee of this University consider a distinct designation for research masters degrees.
UWA and Postgraduate Coursework Programs: A Discussion Paper

... it is desirable that provision should be made for further instruction in those practical arts and liberal studies which are needed to advance the prosperity and welfare of the people....

(Preamble, The University of Western Australia Act, 1911)

The nature of the masters degree has changed rapidly and substantially in Australia and overseas. The masters offered entirely, or primarily, by coursework is now a prominent feature of Australian higher education. Coursework masters programs are the most rapidly growing courses in the country ... In almost all discipline areas, the coursework masters attracts more students than the research masters, an indication of the attraction that it holds for students, industry and the professionals. Though the factors influencing this growth have not been the subject of detailed study, they are clearly a complex mix of market forces and social trends, including the influence of mass undergraduate education, the knowledge and skills required to adapt to social and technological change, the growth in specialized professional career positions, and, not least, increasingly competitive labour markets. ... The growth in the coursework masters has challenged traditional assumptions about the form and purpose of the masters degree.

(DEET 1995: 3)

1. Introduction

This paper has been written as part of the Review of Course Structures and reports on postgraduate coursework degrees. It highlights recent developments in such degrees and needed actions if UWA wishes to seriously engage in this area. The Working Party was asked to address the following Terms of Reference:

- To explore best practice in professional postgraduate coursework programs.
- To examine major trends in postgraduate education in relevant Australian universities, and in particular within the Go8 universities.
- To examine postgraduate developments at UWA.
- To compare the UWA experience with WA and Go8 institutions.
- To identify opportunities (in general) for further postgraduate developments at UWA.
- To report and recommend on appropriate postgraduate course structures including, but not limited to:
  - Appropriate entry standards.
  - Appropriate length of course or number of units for completion.
  - Structure of postgraduate and graduate courses.
  - The role of undergraduate units in postgraduate courses.
  - The relationship between postgraduate courses and honours courses.
  - The nexus between onshore and offshore courses.
  - The role of professional associations in terms of postgraduate course content and structure.
- Recognition of prior learning (including work experience).
- Credit and substitution provisions.
- Named Vs generic degrees.
- Equity and access.
- Role and practice of articulated programs.
- Cross faculty programs.
- Efficiency in the delivery of courses.

- To examine and report on appropriate guidelines for jointly-badged postgraduate courses.
- To report on the coursework/research linkage, in particular potential progression to doctoral programs from postgraduate coursework courses.

In addressing these Terms of Reference we have divided this paper into two main parts. Part A examines the postgraduate coursework market. Part B examines structural issues relating to coursework programs at UWA. In both cases the Working Party examined relevant literature, DEST and UWA data, and Faculty and University Rules. Members of the Working Party also surveyed all but one faculty. The survey questionnaire can be found as Appendix 1.

The paper is broken into a number of parts. The first section examines the remarkable growth in coursework programs over the last two decades. In Section 2 we examine some of the main characteristics of those enrolled in postgraduate coursework programs. In Section 3 we detail UWA’s experience and suggest that, despite one or two major exceptions, this university has been all but insulated from the rapid rise in postgraduate coursework programs. We suggest probable reasons for this insulation as well as potential areas of development. In Section 4 we explore areas where UWA has been successful to see if they offer general guidance to the university should it seek to extend its range of offerings in postgraduate coursework education. We also report on good practice in postgraduate education. In the final section we present our recommendations.

In Part B we explore UWA practice in areas concerning the miscellany of matters having to do with course structures and rules.

**PART A: UWA AND POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAMS**

**1. A Growth Sector**

The last two decades have witnessed significant changes in the structure, composition, funding and enrolments in the Australian higher education sector. In the period 1983 to 2005, total enrolments increased from 348,600 to 945,800, an increase of 171%. As Figure 1 indicates, there was substantial growth in both undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments, although the latter grew from a small base.

Figure 1 not only suggests a constant growth in enrolments over the period, but also that, over time, there has been an increase in the proportion of postgraduate enrolments.

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1 The Working Party consisted of: Simon Anderson, Simon Clarke, Bronwyn Crowe, Judith Finn, Steven McShane, Robyn Owens, D. Plowman (Chair), Ian Reid and Tracy Taylor.
particularly in recent years. In 1985, postgraduate enrolments accounted for 16.5% of all enrolments; in 2005 they constituted 27.3% of all enrolments.

![Fig. 1. Enrolments, Australian Universities, by Level, 1985 – 2005 ('000)](image)

Source: Derived from DEST data

A dissection of postgraduate enrolments suggests that there has been an increase in all forms of enrolment other than in masters by research. It further suggests that coursework programs are the main engine of growth. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

![Fig. 2. Growth in PG Enrolments, by Course Type, Australia, 1989 – 2005](image)

Source: DEST
Figure 2 indicates that in 1989 (the earliest date for which disaggregated higher degree data has been obtained) the numbers enrolled in doctoral programs and masters by research were very similar (8,400 and 6,300 respectively). At the same time there were 16,000 enrolled in Masters by coursework degrees and a further 40,000 in graduate certificate/diploma programs. After growing to a peak of just over 12,000 in 1994, research masters enrolments slowly waned. There were just over 9,000 such enrolments in 2005. By comparison, research doctoral enrolments have continued to increase. There were nearly 39,000 such enrolments in 2005. Graduate certificate and graduate diploma enrolments increased gradually to 1996 and then suffered a decline until 2001. Thereafter there was a rapid increase in enrolments. Over the total period, enrolments in these courses increased by 60%. There was a moderate and sustained growth in coursework masters degrees until 2001. In the four years to 2005 the number of enrolments in such programs more than doubled. Over the total period, coursework masters enrolments increased by nearly 800%.

Table 1 provides greater details of enrolments, by course level, for 2001 and 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Student Enrolments, by Course, Australia, 2001 &amp; 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/G Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/G Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections

Table 1 confirms the major growth in coursework masters degrees in recent years. This growth is understated since a number of students who enroll in graduate diploma or graduate certificate courses do so in order to articulate into masters degrees. If such articulation is taken into account, the impact of masters degrees on total enrolments is magnified. The table also confirms the relatively low and steady enrolments in masters research degrees.

As already noted, the reasons for the burgeoning enrolments in coursework masters programs are complex. However, a number of reasons can be offered including:

⇒ pressures from professional associations for higher qualifications and status;
industry needs for greater product and labour market specialization;
⇒ increased dependence on increasingly sophisticated technology;
⇒ greater global integration of the Australian economy;
⇒ increased international student access to the Australian education sector;
⇒ economic diversification away from mass markets to sophisticated products;
⇒ economic diversification from low to high skilled labour;
⇒ the increased need for labour market entrants to differentiate themselves from the many others with undergraduate degrees;
⇒ the need for continuous learning;
⇒ organisational expectations concerning those seeking management positions.

2. Student Characteristics

Enrolments in postgraduate coursework programs can be examined on a number of dimensions – by field of study, by mode of study, by proportion of international enrolments, and by course level (certificate/diploma/masters). Table 2 provides a summary of these dimensions for 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Enrolments</th>
<th>% FOS</th>
<th>Int'nal</th>
<th>% Int'nal</th>
<th>P/T</th>
<th>% P/T</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>% Masters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture etc</td>
<td>2767</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1739</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture etc</td>
<td>2894</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1637</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>6220</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1637</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3410</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3699</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Studies</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>26489</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>4883</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17833</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12465</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering etc</td>
<td>9632</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5292</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5297</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7180</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Tech</td>
<td>18506</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>13101</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>5921</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15964</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>8875</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1072</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5696</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5884</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgt &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>88812</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44999</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50932</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70438</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Studies</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1239</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nat &amp; Phys Sc</td>
<td>4213</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1546</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2964</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2239</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health</td>
<td>17926</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2605</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13215</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9068</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social, Cultural St</td>
<td>27030</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>5327</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19394</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet. Studies</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL</strong></td>
<td><strong>215 303</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>81973</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>129893</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>146 299</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections

A number of observations can be made from Table 2:
- Nearly one quarter of total enrolments are postgraduate coursework enrolments.
- Coursework enrolments vary significantly between fields of study.
- In both absolute and relative terms, the field of studies with the highest enrolments is that of management and commerce. This field of study accounts for nearly 89 000 enrolments, or 41% of all the enrolments in question.
Social and cultural studies, Education and Information Technology also have relatively high levels of enrolments. Conversely, Veterinary Studies, Dental Studies and Medical Studies have relatively low enrolments.

International students constitute nearly 40% of all enrolments.

The three fields of study with the highest international enrolments are Information Technology, Engineering, and Management and Commerce. In only one field do international enrolments account for less than 10% of total enrolments.

A high proportion of students study on a part-time basis. Such enrolments constitute over 50% of total enrolments in all but two fields.

The combination of data relating to international enrolments and part-time enrolments would suggest that most domestic students study on a part-time basis.

Nearly 70% of all enrolments are in Masters degrees. In only one field do such enrolments fall below 40% of total enrolments.

The above would suggest that most institutions could expect to have approximately one quarter of their students enrolled in postgraduate coursework programs, primarily at the masters level. Such enrolments will enlarge the number of international students while also requiring the provision of programs that suit part-time domestic students.

3. UWA In Comparative Perspective

An analysis of UWA graduate coursework enrolments would suggest that, despite considerable effort in the last five years, the institution has been all but bypassed by the growth in postgraduate coursework programs. This can be illustrated on a number of fronts:

a) comparisons with the university sector at large;
b) comparisons with the Go8;
c) comparisons with other Western Australian institutions;
d) comparisons of FOS enrolments in comparable institutions;
e) analyses of postgraduate offerings at UWA.

3a. Inter-university comparisons

Table 3 compares UWA’s enrolment profile with that of the university sector as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>% of Enrolments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UWA*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor - Research</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters - Research</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Research</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters - Cwk</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Dip</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Cert</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cwk</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*does not include qualifying, bridging, diploma and cross-institutional enrolments. In 2005 these summed to about 1% of total enrolments. Source: DEST
From Table 3 it will be seen that UWA has a higher proportion of undergraduate enrolments compared to the sector. UWA scores well on the research front with double the proportion of doctoral students and research masters enrolments. By contrast it has a much lower proportion of postgraduate coursework enrolments than experienced in the sector.

This overview is interesting, but not compelling. UWA prides itself on its research status and, as the major research institution in the State, could be expected to have a higher proportion of research students. The low number of coursework enrolments is not necessarily a problem if it fits into UWA’s strategy and planning. If, however, low enrolments are an unintended consequence of focusing on other activities, then there is a need to look more closely at outcomes.

3b. UWA and the Go8
The data in Table 3 are only useful if UWA seeks to compare itself with the sector as a whole. This is not the case and UWA associates itself with the Group of Eight. These constitute Australia’s oldest and most research intensive universities. How then does UWA compare in terms of coursework enrolments with this group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>8910</td>
<td>13382</td>
<td>13094</td>
<td>12090</td>
<td>11250</td>
<td>58726</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>3962</td>
<td>7321</td>
<td>9841</td>
<td>10303</td>
<td>10524</td>
<td>41951</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash</td>
<td>7324</td>
<td>11040</td>
<td>12318</td>
<td>13349</td>
<td>12678</td>
<td>56709</td>
<td>21.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>5856</td>
<td>7931</td>
<td>8678</td>
<td>9411</td>
<td>9502</td>
<td>41378</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>3127</td>
<td>5632</td>
<td>6263</td>
<td>6622</td>
<td>6241</td>
<td>27885</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>2125</td>
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<td>2434</td>
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<td>10151</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>2251</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>3163</td>
<td>3621</td>
<td>13124</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>1362</td>
<td>2156</td>
<td>2843</td>
<td>3336</td>
<td>3140</td>
<td>12837</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Go8</td>
<td>32832</td>
<td>51838</td>
<td>58194</td>
<td>60708</td>
<td>59189</td>
<td>262761</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections

Table 4 provides details of such enrolments. It indicates that UWA has less than 4% of all of the coursework enrolments in the Go8 - the lowest level among Australian research-intensive universities. Over the period 2001 – 2005, UWA had between 6.2% and 6.4% of total enrolments in the Go8.
3c. UWA and Western Australian Universities

Table 5. Postgraduate Coursework Enrolments, All Fields of Study, WA Institutions, 2001 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Growth</th>
<th>% WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUT</td>
<td>2795</td>
<td>5815</td>
<td>6231</td>
<td>6430</td>
<td>7128</td>
<td>28399</td>
<td>155.0</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECU</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>3384</td>
<td>3756</td>
<td>4057</td>
<td>4750</td>
<td>18133</td>
<td>117.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>1548</td>
<td>1431</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>7229</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>2125</td>
<td>2457</td>
<td>2434</td>
<td>2233</td>
<td>10151</td>
<td>147.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>2876</td>
<td>1476.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total WA</td>
<td>7091</td>
<td>13607</td>
<td>14722</td>
<td>15101</td>
<td>16267</td>
<td>66788</td>
<td>129.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections

Table 5 suggests that UWA has just over 15% of the State’s coursework enrolments. It indicates that the growth in such enrolments over the period has not been constant despite more than doubling over the five years. It may be noted, however, that UWA’s standing is dependent upon one program, namely the MBA. If this course is omitted from consideration, UWA’s share of State enrolments is only about 7%. This might suggest the need to ensure the well-being of the MBA, and more importantly to see if there are lessons from the MBA experience that might inform the rest of the university.

Table 6 provides a summary of the comparative data by all institutions, Go8 institutions and State institutions. In doing so, it provides more details in terms of enrolments in the different coursework components.

Table 6. Postgraduate Coursework Enrolments, By Course Level, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GCert</th>
<th>%GC</th>
<th>GDip</th>
<th>%GD</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>%M</th>
<th>Doc</th>
<th>%Doc</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Unis</td>
<td>23605</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>43085</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>146299</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>215303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go8</td>
<td>4676</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13385</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>40658</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>59066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA Unis</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>4239</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>9169</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>15932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA*</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>1369</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 2006 data. Sources: DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections & UNISTATS

UWA has a lower proportion of its coursework enrolments in graduate certificate courses, but is not significantly out of line in terms of the proportion of coursework enrolments in graduate diploma and masters courses. UWA has only one program in the emerging coursework doctoral arena. The American experience is one of a growth in such doctorates, particularly in paramedical areas. UWA may wish to monitor this trend and be alert to any potential opportunities that might arise.

Table 7 presents a different set of comparative data in which UWA’s enrolments are compared to other universities, the Go8 and WA institutions by faculty/field of study. The table indicates the proportion of enrolments accounted for by UWA in each area, total enrolments in each area for the period 2001 – 2005, and the percentage increase in
enrolments in each area. Though the last measure is generally high, it is from a low base as indicated by the total enrolments column.

### Table 7. Proportion of Coursework Enrolments, by FOS and Institutions, 2001 - 2005

| Field of Study/Faculty | UWA Enrolments as a Proportion of Enrolments at | | | UWA Enrolments | % change 20001 - 2005 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|
|                        | Go8 (%) | WA Unis (%) | All Unis (%) | 2001 -05 | 2005 |
| Agriculture            | 4.2     | 28.9        | 2.6          | 227      | 133  |
| Architecture           | <1      | <1          | <1           | 3        | -    |
| Arts                   | 1.4     | 7.1         | <1           | 636      | 78   |
| Education              | 7.6     | 15.6        | 1.7          | 2025     | 16   |
| Engineering            | 2.7     | 19.9        | 1.1          | 425      | 410  |
| Info Tech              | <1      | 2.0         | <1           | 103      | 92   |
| Law                    | 2.4     | 63.6        | 1.6          | 569      | 231  |
| Business               | 5.5     | 19.8        | 1.3          | 5039     | 377  |
| MDHS                   | 2.3     | 8.0         | <1           | 672      | 716  |
| N&P Sciences           | 8.0     | 33.6        | 2.6          | 452      | 188  |

* Creative Arts, Society & Culture; ++ Management and Commerce; +++ Medical Studies, Dental Studies and Other Health.

Sources: Compiled from DEST Higher Education Student Data Collections & UNISTATS

3e. **UWA Enrolments**

UWA has an array of coursework offerings, as indicated by Table 8 which shows courses offered by each faculty:

### Table 8. Postgraduate Coursework Courses, by Faculty, UWA, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Grad Cert</th>
<th>Grad Dip</th>
<th>Masters Cwk</th>
<th>Doctor Cwk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALVA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHSS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDHS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPS/NAS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Research is less than 67%.


Table 8 indicates that there are over 180 coursework offerings, an indication of the increasing interest in such offerings. This figure exaggerates the number of separate courses since there is articulation between the graduate certificate, graduate diploma and masters courses in a number of cases. In some articulated programs, the lower level courses are exit only courses. These courses do not enroll students. Rather, they provide an exit point for students enrolled in the masters degrees unable to complete this degree after satisfying the requirements of the lower award (downwards articulation). In a number of other courses, the lower qualifications provide for upward articulation. In
these cases students may be required to enroll in the lower qualification and progress upwards to the higher qualification(s).

In Figures 3 to 5 we illustrate some of the main features of postgraduate enrolments at UWA in 2006.

Figure 3 indicates that less than 20% of those engaged in postgraduate studies are 24 years of age or younger and nearly 25% are aged 40 years or older. The majority are aged between 25 and 39 years. While there is near parity between male and female enrolments, Figure 4 suggests that women enroll pre-career while men enter the work force and then return to studies at a later stage. Figure 5 attests to the high number of part-time students in postgraduate courses. The older the student, the greater the likelihood of part-time studies. Figure 6, which shows enrolments by sex and domestic
or international status, indicates that a high proportion of students by UWA standards (about 40%) are international students. The above suggests that, as with the university sector as a whole, UWA has large proportions of its postgraduate students that are either part-time or international students. If we wish to grow postgraduate enrolments we must be alive to the needs of both part-time and international students. The part-time nature of enrolments, coupled with the fact that most of these students are at an age when they are more likely to have young families, results in a high demand for classes offered outside the normal teaching periods as well as mixed modes of delivery. Successful UWA programs, such as the MBA and Master of Forensic Science, offer a high proportion of teaching outside of the traditional weekday schedule. For example, in the case of the MBA, only two of the 18 units offered in the last Term of 2007 were offered during the traditional weekday schedule, the rest were taught during the evenings or on weekends. Our general observation suggests that the majority of postgraduate coursework classes are offered at standard times despite admitting part-time students.

In terms of teaching delivery, the Working Party found limited use of teaching delivery other than in-person classes and laboratories. There was little mention of mixed-mode teaching, whereby classroom teaching is supplemented by on-line learning such as WebCT activities. While we recommend that faculties consider supplementing in-person teaching with on-line learning, we recognize that learning is by nature social and is more likely to occur when learners share ideas, enquire and problem solve together. Indeed, the stress on face-to-face teaching could represent a distinctive approach to postgraduate courses at this University, one that is based on the robust pedagogical principle that face-to-face teaching brings together groups of people who have a mutual interest in a topic and can deepen their knowledge and experience in the area more interactively than exclusive on-line learning would allow. We do not see this approach as being inconsistent with a mixed-mode of teaching.

Despite the number of courses offered, few have attracted a critical enrolment mass. This is indicated by Table 9 which shows enrolments by course for 2006. The table does not include 50 courses for which there were no enrolments.

Table 9 shows that only two of the 96 listed courses have over 100 enrolments, and only a further four have over 50 enrolments. In only a few cases do graduate coursework enrolments constitute over one third of faculty enrolments. Enrolments in Education, a faculty constituted by a graduate school, had 82% of its enrolments as postgraduate students if HDR students are excluded. In Business the figure was 31%, and in Natural and Agricultural Sciences 25% (though off a very small base). All other faculties had less than 10% of their enrolments in the postgraduate coursework sector, other than Medicine, Dental and Health Sciences which had 11%. The small number of enrolments in many courses raises concerns about the viability of these courses. The Working Party is aware that this is a more complex issue than merely looking at course enrolments. Thus, one would not expect enrolments in exit only articulated courses. Further, where particular courses are composed of units that service more than one course, it is more appropriate to examine the viability of the units on offer rather than
the specific courses. Nevertheless, the Working Party is of the view that the financial viability of courses is a matter for determination at both the introductory and review stages of courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course No</th>
<th>Course No</th>
<th>Course No</th>
<th>Course No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMBA 47</td>
<td>GD HRIR  18</td>
<td>GDScNAS  4</td>
<td>MEICT  11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC App Anth 19</td>
<td>GD Mkt  2</td>
<td>GD TaxSt  9</td>
<td>MEMIM  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC Arts  5</td>
<td>GD Mod Lan 10</td>
<td>LLM  28</td>
<td>MFin  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC BA  89</td>
<td>GD S Mus  1</td>
<td>MAcc  10</td>
<td>MFinMath  9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC Mod Lan  1</td>
<td>GDClinEp  3</td>
<td>MBA  532</td>
<td>MForSc  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC TCom  1</td>
<td>GDCM  1</td>
<td>MBA (Adv)  82</td>
<td>MHRIR  19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCClinE  3</td>
<td>GDClinEp  2</td>
<td>MHRM  13</td>
<td>MHRM  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>GD CSc  9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCIM  3</td>
<td>GDCL  4</td>
<td>MCom  70</td>
<td>MLabMed  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCMath  2</td>
<td>GDENG  3</td>
<td>MCommSt  7</td>
<td>MManTh  37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCNRM  2</td>
<td>GDSE  1</td>
<td>MComSc  5</td>
<td>MME  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCOGE  2</td>
<td>GDSE  3</td>
<td>MCRMSc  27</td>
<td>MREMS  9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCPRS  11</td>
<td>GDHUMB  1</td>
<td>MCRLaw  9</td>
<td>MMgtRes  42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCPSS  11</td>
<td>GDIT  2</td>
<td>MDSc  14</td>
<td>MMkt  17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCRegDev  7</td>
<td>GLaw  5</td>
<td>ME  5</td>
<td>MOGE  31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCScCom  1</td>
<td>GLegPr  6</td>
<td>ME (NSy)  1</td>
<td>MPH  62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCVit  2</td>
<td>GDNR  10</td>
<td>MEB  3</td>
<td>MPharm  31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD Arts  5</td>
<td>GDGE  24</td>
<td>MEC  11</td>
<td>MPSych  25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD Bus Ad  69</td>
<td>GDPharm  30</td>
<td>MEd  95</td>
<td>MPsyGDE  13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>GDPsych  15</td>
<td>MEdLing  3</td>
<td>MRegDev  15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD ComSt  4</td>
<td>GDPhub  11</td>
<td>MEdMan  10</td>
<td>MSc(Or)  14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD Ec  7</td>
<td>GDRegDev  25</td>
<td>MEdPsych  3</td>
<td>MScFNAS  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD Ed  169</td>
<td>GDS  16</td>
<td>MEdSt  3</td>
<td>MSpEd  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD Fin  1</td>
<td>GDScCom  2</td>
<td>MEdSt  26</td>
<td>MTS  7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNISTATS

Deans and faculty members responsible for graduate programs suggested reasons for the low enrolment levels, including:

- There has been little, if any lead, from ‘the University’.
- The University’s stated priorities in the past have been undergraduate, research and then graduate coursework programs. Thus, coursework programs have been given a low priority.
- Possibly as a consequence of the above, coursework programs are under-emphasised in UWA’s Strategic Plan and Operational Priorities Plan. It was noted that while the latter provided specified undergraduate and higher degree targets in the context of teaching, learning and research training, coursework targets were set as part of income diversification. An implication from this Plan is that coursework programs were not part of the core teaching and learning objectives but rather a means of revenue raising.
- Following on from the above, there have not been the same financial incentives available to faculties seeking to develop coursework programs. It was pointed out that these entailed much development without the assurance of success.
Some expressed their budgetary preference for research students. One quipped: faculties are subsidized for research students, taxed for coursework students. Further, the university had been slow to assist in the investment/marketing needed for offshore students and local coursework programs, but less slow to apply levies to students obtained through such investment/marketing.

UWA has set non-ambitious targets for enrolments in coursework programs. Thus, the proportion recommended by the OPP was already exceeded when revised in 2003.

There were claims of long delays in the processing of student applications.

Some saw the need for a cultural change amongst staff who do not see the value or the distinctiveness of vocational coursework programs. These claimed a need for a cultural change regarding admission standards to coursework programs as well as confusion about the role of such programs.

It was noted that industry and professional association pressures for courses were seldom accompanied by industry/association resource support for such programs.

There was a ‘lack of hunger’ for such programs among staff members and satisfaction with the status quo.

There was an absence of a climate in which coursework programs were viewed as legitimate and valuable programs in their own right. Instead, they were often considered as additions to make honours programs viable or to provide alternative pathways to doctoral programs.

There had been a lack of interest and of investment in such courses over many years.

Research and other pressures on academic staff made it difficult for them to diversify into coursework programs.

The government’s imposition of fees on most coursework programs had adversely affected enrolments in a number of established courses.

A number saw undergraduate programs as their faculty’s ‘bread and butter’ programs. Some of these noted that postgraduate courses were treated merely as ‘add-ons’ rather than independent programs.

A negative enrolment cycle had developed in some areas. Because of small enrolments, postgraduate students had been enrolled in undergraduate classes. This led to dissatisfaction amongst fee paying students and a loss of enrolments.

Some claimed that in a number of cases their postgraduate offerings were indistinguishable from their undergraduate offerings.

Some observed that the skill set amongst existing staff was often not appropriate to potential niche coursework areas. Some staff were inflexible, and a number were too inexperienced or in other ways unsuited to teaching postgraduate classes.

The high costs of developing programs reduced the incentive to undertake this work, particularly in niche market areas.

The developments within Architecture, in which the graduate entry degree will now be a masters degree, is worthy of more investigation to see whether or not there are other entry degrees that could be converted into masters degrees. The
so-called Melbourne model could be useful in certain parts of this university in stimulating a more fertile base for graduate programs.

- Double degrees have diverted potential students from graduate programs.
- In some areas, there was a limited number of quality graduates because of a small undergraduate throughput. In these areas, coursework programs might not be viable even if there was industry demand.
- In some areas there was ‘bright flight’ – the loss of top students interstate and overseas.
- In some areas there was a lack of confidence in the ability to gain market share relative to other institutions.

In addition to these and other factors, there is some opposition to the development of the postgraduate coursework area. For example, one submission to the Working Party claimed that there should be two components to UWA’s ‘brand’ – ‘the best university in the state and excellence in undergraduate teaching and postgraduate research’. In this view, ‘extending our brand to something else entirely (postgrad coursework) would seem to weaken our current brand’.

Though the Working Party is supportive of the development of postgraduate coursework programs, it has not used this discussion paper to strongly push the case. Rather, as noted in the introduction, it is more concerned with highlighting current developments and what UWA may need to do should it choose to be a meaningful player in this area of tertiary education.

3f. Promises of Things to Come?
It would be incorrect to paint the UWA picture as totally black. There are a number of successes, and a range of initiatives that are worthy of note. These suggest a potentially brighter picture in the future.

- A number of established courses have been able to maintain good enrolments, including Masters of Law (28 enrolments in 2006), Business Administration (532), Oil and Gas Engineering (31), Education (84) and Educational Studies (26).
- There has been a large increase in the number of new graduate courses, some of which have proved successful, including masters in business research (42), commerce (70), criminal justice (27), clinical audiology (30), pharmacy (30), manual therapy (37) executive MBA (47), and the MBA (Advanced) (82).
- As noted, Architecture will become a masters program from 2008. This is in line with similar developments elsewhere and also suggests the potential to build on other graduate entry programs in the future. Such programs exist in Education, Law, Arts, Medicine and Social Work.
- The Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences has introduced the first coursework doctorate at UWA (Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Though this degree has not as yet ‘taken off’, it may be symptomatic of things to come. Environmental scanning, particularly in the USA, would suggest that in a number of paramedical areas such as audiology and physiotherapy, professional bodies are seeking to
raise their members’ status by requiring a doctoral qualification. In most cases these doctorates are coursework based. With appropriate development of existing masters degrees and good professional association contacts, UWA is well placed to capitalize on this development should it become a part of the Australian scene.

- The 2007-8 Budget has extended Youth Allowance and Austudy ‘to students enrolled in an approved Masters by coursework program which is required for entry into a profession, or is the fastest pathway to professional entry’. This may assist with enrolments.
- Faculties reported that they had developed new courses ‘linked to specific industry needs and student demands’. At least two faculties had appointed a senior member as the director of graduate programs. One faculty undertook a major review of its graduate coursework offerings in the last 12 months.
- Despite the financial disincentives reported in the previous section, at least one of those interviewed proffered that coursework programs had a lower cost relative to supervised research degrees.
- Two faculties reported reviews to identify niche markets for coursework programs, particularly markets likely to gain industry sponsorship.
- FEMCS had successful established processes for admission of Indian students into its faculty’s postgraduate courses.
- There were also reports of (a) industry pressure for retraining and the development of specialized courses in new areas of industry/needs; (b) students seeking conversion courses, and (c) staff interested in postgraduate teaching.

These developments give cause for muted optimism. As one faculty noted, though coursework degrees ‘were gaining priority’ this was ‘only moderately so for a number of reasons’.

4. Good Practice in Postgraduate Coursework Education

UWA aspires to be a great university. This would require that it performs well in those areas in which it chooses to be engaged. Here we suggest some good UWA practice, as well as the best practice suggested by a recent national review of professional postgraduate education.

UWA’s most successful graduate coursework program has been the MBA. The ‘MBA family’ enrolled over 830 students in 2006. Some of this course’s success factors may be relevant to other parts of the university. These include:

- A prime mover advantage, having been established in 1973, more than 10 years before the next WA-based MBA.
- For the period 1993 – 2006, a school dedicated to the program and which raised enrolments more than five-fold (an important issue for the UWA Business School is whether or not integration will reduce the ‘MBA energy’).
- An innovative approach including: trimesterisation, the development of course articulation, and the first offshore program.
- Product differentiation – the ‘MBA’ family consists of five integrated programs.
- Linkages with other faculties to offer combined courses.
- Brand image creation and aggressive marketing.
- Regular information sessions on courses.
- Industry involvement in, and assistance with, course developments.
- Company-specific ‘bespoke’ programs.
- Establishment of a first class student administrative service (nominated for Carrick Citation).
- A system of identifying, liaising with, and supporting students from the application stage.
- Recruitment of staff specifically for graduate coursework teaching.
- Identification and use of adjuncts with good industry experience and teaching skills.
- A requirement that all courses be assessed by students each and every time offered.
- A reputable and interested Advisory Board.
- Teaching practices suited to adult learning, and to the part-time audience. The latter includes evening, weekend, intensive, and block teaching; summer programs; and mixed modes of teaching.
- Industry immersion as appropriate.
- Provision for intensive offshore experiences – in particular the China Study program and the Asian Intensive Management Program. The latter is offered by a consortium of Australian universities in which UWA was a founding member. The course has been offered in Penang for a number of years.
- An active alumni/student body which assists in the provision of life-long learning opportunities – Survival Skills for Managers, Board Encounters, Breakfast Briefings etc.
- Environmental scanning and course revisions as appropriate.
- Engagement in national and international competitions (with a deal of success).

In 2003, Reid, Rennie and Shortland-Jones undertook a study on best practice in professional postgraduate education commissioned by the former Australian Universities Teaching Committee. In the words of one of the authors who was also a member of the Working Party,

The investigation revealed substantial agreement between staff and students across different institutions, courses and fields of study about the principles of “best” practice in postgraduate coursework. Seventeen criteria emerged from the literature review and consultative process, and were then incorporated into the survey instrument. With eight supplementary criteria, representing additional considerations noted recurrently by respondents, the result was a total set of 25 principles. …. Set out in bald summary, the 25 principles have very limited value except as a practical checklist that can be used by individuals or groups responsible for developing, teaching, reviewing and benchmarking postgraduate courses, especially courses with a professional focus. (Reid, 2007)

We set out below the 25 ‘best practice’ principles.
Best practice in course administration

- Prospective students can easily obtain clear, detailed and up-to-date information about the course.
- Entry standards and procedures appropriately combine rigour, equity and flexibility.
- The course is regularly benchmarked against comparable courses elsewhere, to validate claims made about its quality, distinctiveness, and/or innovative features.
- Information about learning outcomes is routinely obtained, compared with graduate attribute profiles and requisite professional competency standards, and used to improve course quality.

Best practice in curriculum development

- The structure of the course matches its objectives.
- The curriculum content has enough intellectual depth, scholarly currency and wide practical applicability to justify its being offered at a postgraduate level.
- The course strikes a suitable balance between vocational training and generalist education (e.g. by developing high order cognitive skills).
- Relevant industry/professional activities are integrated into the course.

Best practice in pedagogy

- The teaching/learning interaction engages the students as adult learners whose experience is valued (e.g. by including activities that give them scope to contribute their own knowledge).
- The mode of delivery utilises technology in a way that ensures suitable access and flexible study options for the target group.
- Feedback to students on their progress is provided frequently, informatively and constructively.
- Feedback is obtained systematically from students about their perceptions of the quality of the course, including how well it is taught.

Best practice in assessment

- There is consistency of standards between units and teachers.
- Assessment is fair and transparent.
- Assessment requirements are aligned with course objectives, and flexible enough to link theory with professional practice.

Best practice in student support

- Teachers are personally supportive.
- The needs of students with different cultural backgrounds are met.
- Assistance is readily available for special needs, e.g. linguistic support for NESB students.
- There are adequate resources (e.g. library, IT, clinical) to support the course.

Best practice in dealing with the professional context

- Networking in the field is promoted.
• Information is provided about post-course employment.
• The course is responsive to input and evaluation from the relevant professional/industry bodies.
• Graduates from the course have a high employment rate and high workplace approval.

Best practice in providing value
• Teachers have excellent academic and professional credentials.
• The course as a whole is affordably priced and gives value for money.

5. Recommendations
In earlier sections of this paper we identified the significant growth in postgraduate coursework education that has taken place in Australia over the last two decades. We further noted that UWA had not been in the mainstream of this development. UWA could, of course, determine that it is best served by seeking a student profile that reflects its research orientation and that continues to harness its access to high TEE achievers. In our view, such an approach and the development of a critical mass in professional courses can go hand-in-hand. We see that a number of areas of importance to UWA, areas canvassed by the Operational Priorities Plan, would be assisted by greater critical mass in the area of postgraduate coursework programs including students’ international experience, increasing the number of international students, increasing the number of fee paying students, diversifying UWA’s funding base, increasing the level and proportion of unrestricted income, and greater industry linkages and collaboration. UWA is seeking to have a critical mass of enrolments of 20,000 by 2010. Postgraduate coursework programs can assist in reaching this target. Indeed, if UWA had grown this area in line with the sector as a whole, the target for 2010 would be in need of revision. Our recommendations are directed at UWA strategy, culture, resources and operations.

Recommendation 1
That UWA’s Strategic Plan explicitly acknowledge the role of postgraduate coursework programs in adding to the university’s diversity, reach and mission.

Recommendation 2
That UWA’s OPP establish stretch targets for postgraduate coursework enrolments.

Recommendation 3
(a) That, other than in circumstances where there are social benefits in offering a particular course, postgraduate course should become financially viable over the medium term.

(b) That, to assist in new courses become financially viable:
   i. faculties continue to provide details of expected enrolments and in order to ensure the financial viability of postgraduate courses;
ii. the Terms of Reference for the review of fee paying courses explicitly include the evaluation of the financial viability of such courses;
iii. overhead and infrastructure charges on new courses be phased in over a period of time as appropriate; and
iv. UWA funding models provide positive encouragement for such courses.

Recommendation 4
That faculties make provision for part-time graduate coursework students through consideration of (a) evening and week-end classes, (b) intensive and block modes of teaching, and (c) mixed modes of teaching.

Recommendation 5
That Student Services and faculties/schools provide effective services for postgraduate students, who are predominantly either international students or part-time students.

Recommendation 6
That faculties and schools ensure that appropriate teaching and learning methods are employed in professional graduate courses.

Recommendation 7
That faculties explore with professional and industry bodies any opportunities that might be provided by the Australian Government’s move to extend Youth Allowance and Austudy to students enrolled in Masters by coursework programs.

Recommendation 8
That faculties actively seek industry sponsorship of professional graduate programs.

Recommendation 9
That, in their recruiting, faculties consider the needs of postgraduate teaching. This may include persons with relevant professional experience in addition to academic qualities.

Recommendation 10
That faculties explore the use of adjunct/clinical personnel in postgraduate teaching.

Recommendation 11
That Schools benchmark their professional graduate courses against those of appropriate institutions on a regular basis.

Recommendation 12
That the best practice principles cited in Section 4 of this paper be used regularly as a checklist when reviewing existing postgraduate courses or considering the establishment of new courses.
PART B: COURSE STRUCTURES AND RELATED MATTERS

1. **Definitional Issues**

Different institutions use different terms to describe the same or similar courses. Here we seek to explain the terminology used in this part of the paper.

Figure 1 indicates UWA’s student enrolments in 2006.

### Fig 1. Classification of UWA Enrolments 2006

- **UWA Students 17 538**
  - Undergraduate 13 443 (77%)
  - Postgraduate 4095 (23%)
  - Research 1981 (11%)
  - Coursework 2114 (12%)
  - Grad Entry 446 (2.5%)
  - Honours 421 (2.4)
  - Pass 12103 (69)
  - Other+ 473 (2.7)
  - Masters 331 (2)
  - Grad Dip 505 (3)
  - Grad Cert 184 (1)
  - Other* 61

Source: UNISTATS

* Diplomas 61, Enabling 156, Cross Institutional 254, Non-Award 2.
+ Qualifying 22, Cross Institutional 36, Doctorate 3.

The figure suggests that students may be initially classified as undergraduate and postgraduate. The latter, in turn, may be divided into research students and coursework.
students. Since a number of postgraduate courses include both coursework and research, for present purposes a coursework program is one in which any assessed research constitutes less than 67% of the total assessment, that is, the program does not meet the requirements of the Commonwealth’s Research Training Scheme. It will be seen that the Higher Research Degree component is divided into doctoral (including professional and higher doctorates) and research masters degrees. The postgraduate coursework component includes masters degrees, graduate diplomas and graduate certificates.

In some discussion there is a differentiation between graduate and postgraduate courses. Postgraduate courses are usually referred to as those in which the higher studies build on the undergraduate disciplinary foundations. Graduate studies are often referred to as studies, at a higher level, which do not build on the undergraduate disciplinary foundations. Thus, in this schema, a masters degree whose admission requirements included a major in a specified or relevant undergraduate degree would be considered to be a postgraduate course. A masters degree whose admission requirements provided for any undergraduate degree would be considered to be a graduate program. Typically, the latter are what are termed ‘conversion’ programs.

A conversion program is one designed to provide basic knowledge and skills for those with little or no formal studies in the area of the higher qualification. A good illustration of such a course at many universities is the Master of Professional Accounting. Graduates who do not have an undergraduate background in accounting may enroll in this degree and meet the professional requirements to practise as accountants. This may be compared with the Master of Accounting which is a specialist course that builds on formal undergraduate studies in accounting.

The term ‘professional’ is often associated with postgraduate qualifications. Here we define professional qualifications as those that enable graduates to work in their area of vocational interest which may also involve the meeting of professional entry standards. Professional programs may be specialist or conversion programs.

‘Articulation’ is a term used to describe a situation in which one course forms a part of another course. The most common form of articulation is where graduate certificates articulate into graduate diplomas and where graduate diplomas articulate into masters degrees. In each situation, part of the higher award may be satisfied by undertaking the lower offering. The above example may be referred to as ‘upward articulation’ since completing the lower qualification may provide for entry into the higher qualification. In addition to the above, there may be ‘downward articulation’. This is a situation in which those enrolled in a masters degree may, if they are unable to complete that degree but satisfy the requirements of a graduate certificate or diploma, be awarded the lower qualification. In these cases, the lower qualification is an exit only course, that is, there is no direct admission for that course.

Traditionally, in Australian universities honours level courses have been regarded as undergraduate courses. Increasingly these courses are being regarded as equivalent to the first year of a masters degree in many institutions and most UWA faculties.
Figure 2 suggests that those completing an undergraduate qualification in discipline ‘A’ have a number of options should they seek to undertake further studies. They can specialize in discipline ‘A’ through either masters degrees (by research or coursework) or may progress to the PhD through one of three routes: by way of a masters by research, an honours program, or a preliminary program. Those continuing to engage in studies in discipline ‘A’ are engaging in postgraduate and specialist programs.

Students continuing their studies but in a different area (discipline ‘B’) are engaging in graduate and conversion studies. Often this involves either upward or downward articulation to or from graduate certificate or graduate diploma courses. This route does not preclude admission into a doctorate by way of a preliminary program.
In terms of course structure and design, it is useful to differentiate between named degrees and generic degrees. Named degrees are those that directly identify the area or discipline of the degree – for example Master of Finance and Master of Psychology. Generic degrees are those that use a common structure in allowing for a range of specialisations – for example, Master of Commerce (Finance) and Master of Commerce (HRM). Generally, the former are specialist degrees, the latter conversion degrees.

2. Admission Requirements

The typical coursework Masters degree program comprising coursework, project work and research in varying combinations, may be entered from a Bachelors degree, a Bachelor Honours degree or a Graduate Diploma. Coursework Masters degrees are often structured in a three to four semester nested arrangement with the Graduate Certificate (one semester) Graduate Diploma (a further semester) and Masters degree (a further two semesters).

Australian Qualifications Framework

Postgraduate courses cater for a range of circumstances and so it is not surprising to find that there are no uniform entry requirements. Conversion courses tend to be more eclectic in terms of applicants’ academic background, may use upward articulation as a screening mechanism and, in some cases, may make provision for applicants who do not have an undergraduate degree but who do have substantial relevant experience.

Table 10 indicates the major entry requirements for coursework programs. It should be noted that many courses prescribe more than one set of admission requirements, thus the requirements are not mutually exclusive of each other. In one extreme case, there are seven possible entry routes.

The table suggests that there are 34 courses that do not prescribe the undergraduate background of applicants. As noted, these are probably conversion courses. The figure may overstate or understate the number of conversion courses, depending on how narrowly one defines ‘conversion’. The overstatement may result from those conversion courses that provide for articulation. To the extent that the masters entry requirements include articulating graduate diplomas or graduate certificates, there will be an overstatement of the number of genuinely independent courses. Understatement may result in particular areas where students are seeking to gain a qualification in a niche vocational market. A case in point is the Master of Engineering Asset Management which is offered jointly by the Faculties of Engineering and Business. This course requires students to have engineering qualifications but broadens rather than deepens the engineering training.

Few courses, at any of the three levels listed, specify an undergraduate grade average for admissions. This is somewhat deceptive. Some courses are not transparent in this respect. Thus, a number of courses provide some discretion to faculties which enable them to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Any undergraduate discipline</th>
<th>Specific discipline(s)*</th>
<th>Professional Qualification/Experience</th>
<th>Undergraduate degree plus Work Experience</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>unspecified = 6 courses</td>
<td>unspecified = 22</td>
<td>unspecified = 14</td>
<td>unspecified = 2</td>
<td>&quot;any other test&quot; = 5, professional registration = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unspecified = 6% GPA = 1</td>
<td>unspecified = 60% GPA = 1</td>
<td>unspecified = 2</td>
<td>unspecified = 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70% GPA = 2</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<td>3 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>unspecified = 17</td>
<td>unspecified = 36</td>
<td>unspecified = 20</td>
<td>unspecified = 1</td>
<td>&quot;Other test&quot; = 8, better English competence = 2, exclusion of ‘home’ discipline or honours = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60% GPA = 2</td>
<td>‘equivalent to u/g’ = 4</td>
<td>‘equivalent to u/g’ = 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>unspecified = 11</td>
<td>unspecified = 23</td>
<td>unspecified = 8</td>
<td>unspecified = 5</td>
<td>&quot;Other test&quot; = 6, exclusion of ‘home’ discipline = 1, professional registration = 5, police clearance = 6, medical clearance = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65% GPA = 1</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65% GPA = 1</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes ‘relevant’ disciplines.  
discriminate on grounds that are not clearly stated. Examples of these admissions requirements include:

⇒ ‘and a pass in any test prescribed by Faculty’
⇒ ‘the capacity to benefit from the course, demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Faculty’
⇒ ‘the capacity to benefit from the course demonstrated to the Faculty’s satisfaction by passing any test which may be prescribed by the Faculty or otherwise.’

These, and similar forms of wording, have been used to informally apply a grade average in assessing applicants’ submissions. It would be better, in such situations, that the entry requirements be spelt out. There is a degree of imprecision about ‘professional experience’ and how it differs from ‘work experience’. In relation to work experience, most of the courses that make provision for this matter prescribe two years of experience. However, eight do not indicate the length of experience required, four prescribe one year, and a small number provide for more than two years (including one ‘experience entry’ course which prescribes 10 years).

In relation to articulated courses, three observations are in order. In the first place, many courses prescribe identical entry criteria for graduate diplomas and the masters degrees to which they articulate. In these cases, the role of articulation is unclear since applicants satisfying the entry criteria can enroll directly into the masters course. A major rationale for articulation is to enable the graduate diploma to act as a winnower of applicants who may not fully meet the masters entry requirements. Typically, this arrangement will provide for, say, a lower WAM for graduate diplomas entry coupled with the prescribed grade average needed for articulation with the masters degree. The Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (GDBA) may be cited as an example. It provides for admission for those who do not meet the criteria for direct admission to the MBA. Those completing the GDBA with a grade average of 65% are permitted to articulate to the MBA.

The second observation is that a large number of courses do not prescribe a grade average for upward articulation from the graduate diploma to the masters degree. Most of those that do prescribe an average provide for 60%.

The third observation is the number of articulated courses in which the higher course does not include the lower course as part of the entry requirements. We estimate that about one third of such courses do not formally acknowledge that successful completion of a lower articulation qualification is grounds for entry into the higher qualification.

The fourth observation concerns the practice in at least one Faculty of allowing upward articulation for students who do not meet articulation requirements, but without giving credit for the units completed in the lower qualification. This creates a number of difficulties. We believe that the rules for upward articulation should be clearly specified and applied. Under UWA General Rule 1.2.1.12(7) this would result in any articulation being accompanied by credit for completed units.
It will be noted that a number of courses have admission criteria that are peculiar to the course in question – police and/or medical clearances, professional registration and the like. Some conversion courses exclude persons with undergraduate backgrounds in the area of the courses.

As noted, we believe that variations in admission criteria are a natural corollary of courses offered over a wide range of areas and seeking different outcomes. However, we do recommend that any admissions criteria be transparent, and further that where there is upward articulation, that the lower qualification be listed as part of the higher award’s entry criteria.

Recommendation 13
That the admissions requirements for all courses be transparent and easily understood by applicants and administrators.

Recommendation 14
That, where there is a sequence of (upward) course articulation:

(d) the higher award acknowledge such articulation as one of the grounds for admission;

(e) the criteria for articulation be clearly enunciated and adhered to; and

(f) faculties consider using the lower qualification as an enabling course to help applicants meet the admission criteria of the higher course(s).

3. **Length of Courses**

   Even with a common curriculum the length of courses will vary depending on whether they are offered on a semester or term basis, or whether or not students have access to summer classes. A two-year four-semester course could be completed in twelve months if the same material was offered on a three-term basis and there was also provision for summer classes. Rather than focus on the length of courses as a measure of their content, it may be better to concentrate on the number of units to be undertaken. Often, the number of points in a course is a shorthand way of denoting the number of units in that course. However, though most parts of the university use 6-point units (or multiples of 6) in some parts of this university units have a value of 8 points.

   Table 11 presents data relating to course lengths using two metrics: number of units by points, and minimum completion time (full-time equivalent). The table itemises the number of points and the standard duration of courses assuming a student enters with a three year degree. The effects of those entering with an honours degree, or articulating with a graduate diploma, are also indicated. The divisions in the table are not necessarily mutually exclusive as the number of points to be undertaken may vary with different admission requirements. Thus, if students are permitted into a masters course with a three-year degree, they may have to undertake 96 points to complete that course. Those entering the same course with an honours degree, or after having completed a graduate diploma, may have to undertake only 48 points to complete the degree.
Table 11. P/G Courses, UWA, by Course Points and Duration, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration (FTE)*</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certific</td>
<td>6-24 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 yr = 31</td>
<td>28 points = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 yr = 2</td>
<td>32 points = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>0.5 yr = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 yr = 65</td>
<td>84 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 yr = 2</td>
<td>72 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 yr = 1</td>
<td>60 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1.0 yr = 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 yr = 5</td>
<td>144 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 yr = 44#</td>
<td>96 pts = 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8-128 pts = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hons + 1 yr = 35</td>
<td>96 pts = 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GradDip + 1 yr</td>
<td>50 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48 pts = 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 pts = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72 pts = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48 pts = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72 pts = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48 pts = 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| * Three year u/g entry. # Includes 25 courses that provide for honours/GradDip + 1 year.

Table 11 suggests a reasonably consistent pattern, but one with a number of variations. The basic pattern seems to be Graduate Certificate: 24 points (1 semester); Graduate Diploma 48 points (2 semesters) and Masters 96 points (4 semesters). Credit is given in the case of articulated courses, reducing both the points and duration of the masters degrees in question. Further, one year of credit is given in those courses requiring honours entry. Thus, in these cases, the masters degree is seen to be the equivalent of five years or study, either three years undergraduate plus two years postgraduate, or four years undergraduate and one year postgraduate. The conversion to the number of unit-equivalence may result in a 12-unit degree (the typical 2-year program) being capable of completion in 1.5 years, for instance in a three-term year and/or where summer programs are provided.

It will be seen that there are some variations around the general trend. Some courses require more points and time than the norm. In most cases these involve a practical component (e.g. music) or a ‘mini’ degree (thus, the Graduate Diploma with 84 points consists entirely of undergraduate units, while the articulating 144 masters degree is influenced by professional and accreditation requirements). In some cases, the ‘odd’ number of points is the result of interfaculty programs in which different point systems are used for the units on offer. Such cases may be assisted by a standardization of the points system. At the time of the Dickson Report there were reasons why the then Faculty of Economics and Commerce was granted permission to retain its 8-points system for graduate programs. Our understanding is that these reasons may have since disappeared, and it may be opportune to revisit this matter.

Because of the range of entry pathways and methodologies the duration of Masters degree programs varies. However, most Masters degrees require the equivalent of two years of study post the three year Bachelors degree or one year of study post the Bachelor Honours degree of four year (or longer) Bachelor degree.

Australian Qualifications Framework

Review of Course Structures: PG Coursework Programs 35
A curious feature is that the 24-48-96 pattern is common to both 6-point and 8-point courses. This suggests that the 6-point programs have more units than the 8-point programs, possibly as the result of changes brought about in some faculties in implementing the Dickson Report. Rather than reduce any content to bring about 6-point units, it appears that some courses may have maintained the same content by increasing the number of units.

The Working Party has concerns about some differences within either faculty or point-bands. For example, in the case of one faculty having primarily 8-point graduate units, the norm is for the masters degrees to be constituted by 96 points or 12 units. In this faculty these courses are constituted by 48 points and another by 72 points. Similarly, in another faculty having primarily 6-point units, most of the graduate diplomas are constituted by 48 points, but six of its courses are constituted by only 24 points. The first case would appear to equate a masters degree with the same number of points as a graduate diploma, and in the latter case would appear to equate graduate diplomas with the same number of points as a graduate certificates. Closer scrutiny of these courses suggests that these situations arise because the entry requirements treat applicants with honours, graduate diplomas and a three year degree plus two years of work experience on the same basis. This would suggest that two years of work experience is comparable with a fourth year of undergraduate study or with a graduate diploma. We do not support this contention.

On the basis of the foregoing we would recommend:

**Recommendation 15**

(d) That Masters degrees of this university require the equivalent of at least two years of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree or the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the Bachelor Honours of four years (or longer) degree.

(e) That graduate diploma courses of this university require the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree.

(f) That graduate certificates of this university require the equivalent of one half year of full-time study post the three year Bachelor degree.

**Recommendation 16**

That faculties currently teaching 8-point units (or multiples thereof) give consideration to adopting 6-point units (or multiples thereof).

**4. Relationship with Honours and Undergraduate Programs**

The Working Party identified two principal relationships between graduate coursework programs and honours programs. The first, one already noted in the previous section, is that the relevant honours year is usually treated as the equivalent of the first year of a two-year masters degree. This approach is supported by the Australian Qualifications Framework.
The second principal relationship is that in many cases honours units form a part of graduate coursework degrees. We understand that this practice may lead to some efficiencies, but also understand that it can create some difficulties. We discuss these more broadly below.

In the case of other undergraduate courses or units, a survey of current practice would suggest that (a) a number of courses use undergraduate units, (b) that some graduate diplomas and at least two masters degrees consist entirely or predominantly of undergraduate units and (c) that some courses provide credit for undergraduate studies. One major difficulty of this approach is that fee-paying students do not believe that they obtain value for money by being placed in undergraduate classes. Some who were interviewed indicated that graduate students ‘revolted’ over being placed in undergraduate classes. This can lead to a vicious cycle: in order to overcome the small enrolments in graduate courses, classes are combined with undergraduate courses. Graduate student dissatisfaction, and the attendant word-of-mouth that accompanies such discontent, further reduces enrolments. Further, reliance on undergraduate units may reduce UWA’s capacity to meet the characteristics for masters degrees prescribed by the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Characteristics of learning outcomes at [the Masters] level include the mastery or overview of the relevant field of study or area of professional practice and the emphasis may range from the acquisition or enhancement of specific professional or vocational coursework and research, through to the acquisition of in-depth understanding in a specific area of knowledge which is usually undertaken through research. A graduate of a Master’s degree program is able to:

⇒ provide appropriate evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist body of theoretical and applied topics;
⇒ demonstrate a higher order of skills in analysis, critical evaluation and/or professional application through the planning and execution of project work or a piece of scholarly research; and
⇒ demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations, to solve complex problems and to think rigorously and independently.

Australian Qualifications Framework

Recommendation 17
That postgraduate students not normally be required to enroll in undergraduate units, other than at Level 4.

Recommendation 18
That existing postgraduate courses consisting entirely or predominantly of undergraduate units not be designated as postgraduate courses.
5. Structure of Postgraduate Courses

As noted in the definitions section, there are two main methods of structuring postgraduate courses: either as stand alone courses, or as generic courses. There are examples of both approaches within the University. For example, in the Business School, the Master of Human Resources and Industrial Relations (MHRIR) is an example of the former, while the MCom (HRIR) is an example of the latter. The former is a specialist course and concerned with greater depth in the discipline. The latter is a conversion program. It enables those without an undergraduate background in the area to acquire professional skills in employment relations. The MCom can be structured as a generic degree since it can provide a shell for conversion courses in a range of disciplines. Generic degrees are differentiated by having a common structure and common rules in relation to admission requirements, credit and substitution provisions, progress status and the like.

There have been claims that generic degrees can significantly reduce the number of separate courses on offer, and thus course administration. However, as noted in the case of human resources, degrees can perform different roles – either specialisation or conversion. The generic structure is less appropriate for specialist degrees since these necessarily require provisions that are relevant to the discipline in question. Thus, we do not think that it would be appropriate to prescribe a particular course structure. We do note, however, that a number of faculties either do not provide for conversion programs in potential areas of demand, or if they do, they do not seek the economies that might be attached by having a generic course structure. We would recommend that faculties give consideration to conversion programs utilising generic structures.

The Working Party was asked to consider the issue of providing for the award of distinction and high distinction in relation to coursework masters degrees. There is precedent for the former in both Law and Medicine, but we are not aware that any course provides for the award of high distinction. In the case of Law there is a consistent approach in that the award of the degree with distinction is governed by faculty general provisions. In the case of Medicine, where the award is governed by the rules of each course, there is less consistency.

We do not pass judgment on the merits or otherwise on the award of masters with distinction or high distinction. We believe that the Working Party on Framework and Definition of Degrees is better placed to make recommendations in this matter. We are, however, of the view that it is preferable for a university-wide approach to the classification of grades as is the case with undergraduate awards. Thus, we believe that the award of the degree with distinction (and, if agreed to by Academic Council, higher distinction) should be regulated by University General rules rather than by individual course rules or faculty-specific rules.

Recommendation 19

(a) That faculties give consideration to providing conversion programs in areas of perceived demand.
(b) That, where provision is made for a number of related conversion programs, faculties give consideration to generic structures as the vehicle for these programs.

Recommendation 20
(a) That the Review of Course Structures Working Party on Framework and Definition of Degrees consider the awarding of coursework masters degrees with distinction and high distinction.
(b) That any decision resulting from (a) be prescribed by University General Rules.

6. Nexus between Onshore and Offshore Programs
In addressing this Term of Reference the Working Party was keen to ensure that, though delivery methods might differ between onshore and offshore programs, the content, course structure and general rules were the same. Our assessment of the evidence that was available to us satisfied us that there was consistency in the application of rules, assessment, and other elements of courses.

Recommendation 21
That UWA continue to ensure that the same standards and rules are applied to both onshore and offshore courses.

7. Role of Professional Associations
A number of courses must be approved or accredited by professional associations if they are to be used for registration or certification in that profession. This can lead to a number of difficulties, as articulated by the Higher Education Council in 1996:

The accreditation processes documented in this report vary between professional fields. The professional bodies generally act as gatekeepers to the professions, and the processes must contribute to the maintenance of consistency of standards across the nation and internationally. In its most rigorous form an external accreditation process entails on-site visits, review of students’ work, and consultations with university staff, as well as the usual curriculum review. However, other activities classed as ‘accreditations’ undertaken by professional bodies can cover many practices ranging from detailed specification of curriculum to no documentation at all, and from very close oversight to little more than a broad examination of the relevant course on paper.

There is no doubt that a major concern of the universities is to conduct courses which satisfy the requirements for accreditation or membership of professional bodies. In addition, universities have a responsibility to initiate debate about the professions far beyond the requirements of current practice.

The extent to which the threat of sanctions by the professional bodies dominates the university agenda reflects the strength of their involvement and their history in these matters with any particular
Most of those interviewed considered that their faculties had good relationships with the relevant professional associations. A number also indicated that they had formed advisory boards in which professional bodies and members of relevant industries advised on courses. One faculty reported a favourable outcome in seeking to reduce the number of points in the relevant masters degree from 128 to 96 to bring it in line with UWA norms. This experience contrasts with that of another course in which the number of points considerably exceeds 96, reportedly at the instigation of the professional association. While faculties need to have a good working relationship with professional associations to ensure the accreditation of professional degrees, there is also the need to ensure that courses are not overloaded, and that they are reasonable in terms of content, duration and costs.

Recommendation 22
That, in their deliberations with professional associations concerning the content and requirements of courses, faculties ensure that UWA norms are maintained.

Recommendation 23
That faculties consult appropriate professional association and industry representatives regarding postgraduate courses.

7. Recognition of Prior Learning, Credits and Substitutions
The University’s General Rules provide for recognition of prior leaning (RPL) in regards to studies undertaken at other tertiary institutions as well as professional experience. They provide for credit in postgraduate courses on account of previous studies summing up to 50% of the course the student is enrolled in (other than in the case of graduate certificate courses). Where a UWA course articulates with another, full credit is granted for units successfully completed in the lower course.

A reading of admission and credit provisions suggests that most faculties are alive to the need to recognize prior learning, including work experience. We identified three courses in which a high level of experience provided for admission to (graduate certificate) courses. Other courses also required work experience as part of the admissions criteria. We were concerned about two aspects of the application of these rules. Firstly, in a number of cases two years’ work experience is equated with one year of full study. This reduces the number of units to be undertaken in the qualification by half. Secondly, in a
number of cases direct substitution is given for work undertaken in undergraduate courses. Though we acknowledge that work experience has a role in professional development, we do not consider that two years of such experience, particularly without consideration of assessment and objectives, should equate to a fourth year of full-time university study. Further, we do not believe that undergraduate units provide for the high order of skill in analysis, critical evaluation and/or professional application that should characterise professional postgraduate courses.

**Recommendation 24**
*That faculties continue to recognize prior learning in postgraduate coursework programs.*

**Recommendation 25**
*That, though work experience may constitute grounds for admission to courses in part or in whole, such experience should not provide grounds for credit.*

**Recommendation 26**
*That credit should not be provided on a unit-for-unit basis in postgraduate courses for studies undertaken in previously completed undergraduate courses (other than at fourth year level).*

**8. Role and Practice of Articulated Programs**
The nature of articulated programs has been described in an earlier section. In essence, articulation consists of the movement from a lower award, such as a graduate certificate or graduate diploma, to a higher award such as a masters degree. As already noted, some lower awards are exit only awards and do not directly enroll students into those courses. A major rationale in the use of (upward) articulation is to ensure that those entering the masters stage of the hierarchy are competent to undertake that stage of their studies. This may apply to two situations: firstly where students may not have met the required grade average for direct admission into the masters degree, and secondly in those courses that provide for entry on the basis of extensive experience rather than an undergraduate foundation.

In 2003 Academic Council commissioned a report on articulated programs at UWA. The *Report of the Working Party on Non-Graduate Admission and Progression in Articulated Postgraduate Courses* outlined developments in these areas to that time, and noted that General Regulations 28A to 28G had been formulated to meet these developments. In summary, the Regulations provide:

- graduate courses may form part of a continuum;
- normally, the minimum entry standard for the lowest qualification will be the same as for the highest qualification in the continuum;
- graduate certificates would normally consist of at least one semester of full-time or equivalent study and graduate diplomas two semesters;
the assessment at each stage of the continuum must be at the level of the work undertaken at the highest qualification;

- candidates admitted to a graduate diploma course, after satisfactorily completing the graduate certificate, receive full credit for units undertaken in the former course. Similarly, those articulating from a graduate diploma to a masters course receive full credit for units completed in the graduate diploma;

- candidates admitted into a higher level course but who do not complete that course may be awarded the lower level qualification if they successfully complete the requirements of the latter;

- credit (which may not exceed 50% of the articulated course) may be awarded on the basis of:
  - equivalent courses at UWA or other recognized institutions;
  - work completed in courses provided by professional providers;
  - work completed through UWA’s Continuing Education programs;
  - relevant professional experience

The 2003 Working Party identified 25 graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses that articulated into masters degrees, and 26 courses that provided for downward articulation. This Party also suggested that in 19 cases where there was course articulation, the relevant course rules were silent on this issue. The 2007 Handbook suggests that the number of articulating programs has increased to over 70. The difficulty with rule silence on such articulation persists. On our estimate there are over 20 cases in which upward articulation is not referred to in the relevant rules, and a further 30 cases in downward articulation to the relevant qualification is not referred to. In the latter cases the rules do not expressly provide that those admitted directly to the higher qualification may be granted the lower qualification under the appropriate circumstances.

The 2003 Working Party also suggested that in 19 cases where there was course articulation, the relevant course rules were silent on this issue. The 2007 Handbook suggests that the number of articulating programs has increased to over 70. The difficulty with rule silence on such articulation persists. On our estimate there are over 20 cases in which upward articulation is not referred to in the relevant rules, and a further 30 cases in downward articulation to the relevant qualification is not referred to. In the latter cases the rules do not expressly provide that those admitted directly to the higher qualification may be granted the lower qualification under the appropriate circumstances.

The 2003 report examined the performance in the final year of those students who had direct entry into the masters degree and those who, because of a lack of undergraduate qualification, articulated to that final year. The Report concluded:

The [data] suggest that direct entry students perform marginally better than RPL students. However, there was no statistically significant difference in the outcomes of the two cohorts.

The above would suggest that the system of articulation, with its stringent progression requirements, provides an effective screening system .... Other indexes of effectiveness of this system include the fact that in eight of the advanced units undertaken since 2001 the top students in each class were RPL students who had articulated to the [masters degree].

(Report of the Working Party on Non-Graduate Admission and Progression in Articulated Postgraduate Courses, 2003, p.20)

We have no reason to conclude that a similar review at this time would report any differently.

One paradox encountered was that some masters degrees provide for the award of graduate diplomas that may have course codes but nothing to indicate what units or work must be completed to be awarded that diploma. In such situations it would appear that
there is no transparent set of units or other undertakings that must have been completed in order to meet the requirements of the graduate diploma. We would suggest that this is not the best way of handling downward articulation.

Recommendation 27
That, in the case of articulated courses, the relevant rules
   (c) indicate what must be achieved for upward articulation; and
   (d) provide for downward articulation, that is explicitly provide for the award of the lower qualification in the event that a student is unable to complete the higher qualification but meets the requirements of the lower qualification.

Recommendation 28
That, where students enroll directly into a masters degree that provides for the award of a graduate diploma for those students not able to complete the degree, the rules specify
   (a) that the graduate diploma articulates with the masters degree;
   (b) the requirements for the award of the graduate diploma; and
   (c) that the diploma is not a direct entry program.

9. Equity and Access
In providing for student equity and access, the University’s Strategic Plan notes that the ‘University is committed to providing an environment of equal opportunity, free from discrimination, for existing and prospective students in the pursuit of their academic goals and the realization of their potential to contribute to the achievement of the University’s mission’. The University’s ‘Equity Update’ further notes that the Strategic Plan seeks to ‘improve access and participation’.

The Operational Priorities of Student Services in the area are as follows:

- Promote and improve access to UWA courses and educational opportunities (such as study abroad) by students from DEST designated equity groups that are under-represented.
- Minimise prerequisites via bridging units and expansion of first year learning opportunities.
- Contributing to the review of undergraduate course structures with a view to establishing clear defining principles and to ensure the ongoing quality of a UWA education.
- Streamline the processes for credit transfer within and beyond the Go8.
- Introduction of more programs by the Faculties with articulation from TAFE.
- Improve opportunities for students to combine success in study with achievement and leadership in sport, cultural and community activities.
- Lobby the Commonwealth government to improve the income support arrangements for students.

These priorities are geared primarily, if not exclusively, towards undergraduate students. In some respects (in particular credit transfer, articulated bridging courses, and TAFE RPL) postgraduate courses would appear to already meet a number of the priorities. For example, it has already been documented that there is a gender parity in postgraduate enrolments.
As part of the implementation of access and equity plans UWA has undertaken a number of initiatives. These include *UWay*, a special entry programme for students with demonstrated educational disadvantage and whose secondary education has been disrupted through factors such as economic hardship and family disruption. The Excellence Awards Programme guarantees a place to one student from every senior high school in Western Australia, irrespective of advertised TER (as long as basic tertiary entrance requirements are achieved). The EAP recognises that parts of the school sector (rural/isolated schools, low-SES schools) are not as competitive in achieving high TER. The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Programme offers support through networking and discussion groups to women who enrol in disciplines which are traditionally dominated by men and where the attrition rate for female students has been high. In addition, there are a number of initiatives designed ‘to achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of the University’.

Again, these initiatives are directed at undergraduate students.

The prime mechanism for equity and access at the postgraduate level is the extensive scholarship system that operates at UWA. Scholarships are administered by the Scholarship office whose homepage notes that ‘UWA has always recognised merit and excellence and has a history of attracting top quality students, while maintaining principles of equity and access which enhance the University’s student cohort.’ It is evident from a reading of the postgraduate scholarship provisions that they are reserved for research students.

We acknowledge the appropriateness of research scholarships in a research-intensive university, as well as the difficulties attendant in trying to assist a group composed predominantly of either part-time or international students (a situation that is not unique to postgraduate students). However, we would also note that, as in other aspects of university life, postgraduate coursework students have not been considered ‘mainstream’ in terms of access and equity. This would require a different paradigm, one in which coursework students were not seen merely in terms of income and income diversification (a paradigm that seems to ignore the fact that undergraduate students, and many research students, also pay fees by whatever name). We contend that if UWA is serious about being a player in this area of tertiary education, there are grounds for applying equity and access norms to postgraduate students.

*Recommendation 29*

*That Student Services consider mechanisms for meeting the needs of postgraduate coursework students.*

10. **Jointly Badged Courses**

UWA has engaged in a number of jointly badged coursework masters degrees, most of which have not survived. The Master of Psychology (in Industrial and Organisational Psychology) was commenced in 2004 as a joint offering by Curtin University and UWA. It only had one intake despite strong interest in the course. Those involved with the course point to cultural differences, differing expectations regarding out-of-class studies, lack of ‘smooth’ administrative systems, and financial sharing difficulties as leading to the abandonment of this joint program. The Master of Medical Engineering was a course
offered by the four public WA universities. It has only ever enrolled one student who, to this time, has not completed the dissertation. The course has been disestablished. The Master of Natural Resource Systems was also undertaken in concert by the four universities. It enrolled less than five students over its life-time before being disestablished. The Master of Transport Studies was also a cooperative program offered by the four public universities. Recently the Board of this program announced that it would not accept further enrolments. Thus, this course will be removed once enrolled students have completed the course. Two new joint programs with Curtin University have been recently introduced – the Master of Urban Planning (which has yet to enroll any students) and the Master of Public Administration (2 enrolments in 2007). It is too early to know how these new courses will fare.

The foregoing does suggest that considerable care should be taken when entering into joint degree arrangements as the potential for failure is high.

One issue that has concerned the Working Party is the ‘ownership’ of students, and the amount of work that should be done at UWA if a student is to obtain a degree jointly awarded by UWA.

On the first issue we believe that students entering jointly badged degrees should be enrolled at UWA, and meet this university’s enrolment criteria. We do not believe it is appropriate that any partner institution should have control over admissions and merely require UWA to accept whoever that institution chooses. We further believe that the same conditions should apply for partner institutions, but that is a matter for them to determine.

In relation to the content of postgraduate degrees, we believe that a distinction should be made between degrees undertaken jointly with UWA, and those taken in association with UWA. Our view is that where students undertake no less than half of the degree at UWA, it would be appropriate to award a UWA degree (this fits in with the 50% credit provisions that apply when students transfer to UWA). In situations where less than 50% of the degree is undertaken at UWA, we believe that the testamur should note that the degree was undertaken ‘in association’ with UWA rather than awarded by UWA. Students undertaking no work at UWA should not be credited with a joint or ‘associated’ award.

Recommendation 30

(a) That, in any jointly badged courses involving UWA, students must be enrolled by UWA in accordance with its admissions requirements.

(b) That, in any jointly badged courses, students must undertake at least 50% of the work through UWA in order to be awarded a UWA degree.

(c) That, in any joint courses, those students undertaking less than 50% of the work through UWA be awarded a degree ‘in association’ with, rather than by, UWA.

(d) That, in any joint courses, students must undertake a part of the course through UWA in order for any UWA recognition to be afforded the award in terms of (b) and (c).
11. Research Linkages
There are a number of research aspects to coursework degrees. Firstly, all such degrees should be informed by good research. Many coursework degrees make use of research in case materials, assignments, projects and other forms of assessment. Students should be encouraged to read widely and critically. Students are exposed to methods of research and may be required to undertake research. In all, coursework degrees are not mutually exclusive of a research ethos.

In this section, we are not concerned so much with arguing the case for good research in coursework degrees as the way in which these degrees can act as bridges to doctoral programs in line with the admissions criteria of those programs. A number of coursework degrees incorporate sufficient evidence of independent research to satisfy the Graduate Research School’s PhD admission requirements. Some courses are preliminary courses that prepare students for higher research degrees. Others specifically centre on research methodology, such as the Master of Education Research Methods and the Master of Business Research. Both of these degrees had their genesis as the first stage of the relevant Professional doctorates.

It was submitted to us that the university’s degree structure would be assisted by the calling all research masters ‘Master of Philosophy’. It was submitted that this would identify the articulation with the PhD in much the same way as masters degrees articulate with professional doctorates, and further that it would assist the Graduate Research School in its work. We believe there is merit in this suggestion. It would significantly reduce the number of separate programs and more clearly identify coursework degrees. Although research degrees are beyond the remit of the Review of Course Structures, we nevertheless recommend that consideration be given to providing a common nomenclature for masters by research degrees.

Recommendation 31
That the Research Committee of this University consider a distinct designation for research masters degrees.

References
Australian Qualifications Framework [www.aqf.edu.au/vgc_vgd.htm]
Appendix 1

UWA Faculty Survey of Postgraduate Courses

[Please note: this survey is concerned with coursework courses. Research courses are outside the Review’s scope]

A. Recent History and Future Strategy for Postgraduate Courses

A1 Please describe the development and delivery of postgraduate courses offered by your faculty over the past five years (i.e. enrolment changes, course structure changes – you may wish to refer to attached data).

A2 What priority – strategic importance, allocation of faculty resources -- does your faculty place on postgraduate courses?

A3 What are the main factors currently driving and inhibiting the size and quality of postgraduate courses in your faculty?

A4 Does your faculty plan to increase, maintain, or decrease the size of its postgraduate course enrolments and/or course offerings over the next two years?
   -- What are the main reasons for these planned changes?

B. Postgraduate Entry Standards and Transfer Credit

B1 What are the current entry requirements into postgraduate courses in this faculty?

B2 In your view, are these entry standards appropriate? Why or why not?

B3 How does this faculty’s postgraduate entry standards compare to similar (including Go8) universities in Australia?

B4 For any of its postgraduate courses, does your faculty formally recognize prior education?
   -- If so, in what forms does this recognition take (e.g. giving credit)?

B5 For any of its postgraduate courses, does your faculty formally recognize prior work or life experience?
   -- If so, in what forms does this recognition take?

B6 Are the general university rules that relate to credit and substitutions sufficient for you faculty’s purposes, or has the faculty had to tailor different rules?

B7 For any of its postgraduate courses, how does your faculty accommodate access for people with special physical, geographic, or other needs?

C. Postgraduate Course Structure and Access

C1 To what extent are postgraduate courses in this faculty named (“targeted”) or generic? [for example, the MFin is considered a ‘targeted’ degree, the MCom(Fin) a generic degree]
   -- What are the reasons for this emphasis on named versus generic postgraduate courses?

C2 Does your faculty have articulated postgraduate courses (e.g. full degree is sectioned into certificate, diploma, etc.)?
   -- If so, please describe the features of this articulation process?
   -- If so, have articulated postgraduate courses provided your faculty with greater flexibility and enrolments?

C3 Whether or not your faculty has articulated postgraduate courses, what in your opinion are the benefits and disadvantages of articulated postgraduate courses in the fields of study covered by your faculty?

C4 Do postgraduate courses in your faculty cater to part-time students?
   -- If so, in what ways does your faculty facilitate postgraduate courses for part-time students (e.g. evening, weekend classes)?
C5 Do you offer offshore postgraduate programs?
-- If so, please compare the structures of the onshore and offshore courses?

C6 Does you faculty offer any postgraduate courses with other faculties?
-- If so, please describe the advantages and challenges of these cross-faculty postgraduate courses.
-- If so, what guidelines and specific mechanisms would you recommend to support the effective operation of cross-faculty postgraduate courses?

C7 Does your faculty offer jointly badged courses with other institutions?
-- If so, what have been the advantages and challenges of these multi-institutional postgraduate courses?
-- If so, what guidelines and specific mechanisms would you recommend to support the effective operation of these multi-institutional postgraduate courses?

D. Postgraduate Course Units and Length
D1 How many units, and typically how semester-equivalents, are required to complete postgraduate courses by coursework in your faculty?

D2 How does this number of units and completion time compare to similar (including Go8) universities in Australia?

D3 The Australian Qualifications Framework states that most Masters degrees should consist of two years of study post a 3-year Bachelors degree or one year of study post a Bachelor honours degree. What are your views regarding that standard for postgraduate programs in your faculty?

E. Relationship among Postgraduate, Graduate, and Honours Courses
E1 Are undergraduate units associated in any of your faculty’s postgraduate courses?
-- If so, how are they associated and what is the rationale for this connection or involvement of undergraduate units?

E2 Does your faculty offer units for combined honours/masters classes?
-- If so, what is the rationale, and what are the advantages/disadvantages of this approach?

E3 In your view, what should differentiate postgraduate from undergraduate courses?

E4 Does your faculty distinguish in its offerings between graduate and postgraduate courses (where the latter require an undergraduate degree in the discipline of the postgraduate course)?

E5 Do you see any scope for transforming any undergraduate double degree offerings involving your faculty into a bachelors and masters degree?

F. Role of Professional associations in Postgraduate Courses
F1 What role do professional associations play in the structure and composition of your faculty courses?

F2 Have professional associations required you to offer courses in excess of the general points normally needed in your faculty?

G. Other
G1 Do you have any other comments or observations regarding postgraduate coursework offerings?