SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLICY STUDIES

OPERATIONAL PLAN

2012 – 2014
The School of *Social and Policy Studies* brings together four social science disciplines, each with long and excellent reputations and rich histories of engaged scholarship. Formed in 2010, the School unites the strengths, distinctive values, interests and expertise of staff within disciplines of Sociology, Social Work and Social Planning, Politics and Public Policy and Women’s Studies, and the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management. It is one of four Schools within the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

The School of Social and Policy Studies will continue to build on the common interests of the disciplines while maintaining their distinctive qualities and diverse educational missions.

The School will distinguish itself through:

- A commitment to student focused and quality teaching;
- Cross and interdisciplinary research;
- Building a reputation for nurturing the talents of its students regardless of the pathway by which they come to the University;
- A willingness to engage in public policy debates and the policy processes;
- A commitment to Women’s Studies;
- The continued exploration of new frontiers in social theory, political philosophy, public policy, social development and social work;
- The active engagement in the community of which Flinders is part;
- The maintenance of a respectful and supportive culture and environment in which to study and work;
PREAMBLE

This School Operational Plan has been developed both through a consultative process with staff over the course of the year 2011, and in reference to University Planning documents: the University Strategic Plan, Teaching and Learning Plan 2011 - 2014, and the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences Plan.

The School Operational Plan sets out a course for the development of the organisation in its formative years, for the allocation of monies and the strategic efforts in key operational areas for the years 2012 – 2014. The main headings in the Plan, which reflect key areas, are:

Organisational culture and communication
- Research
- Teaching
- Community Engagement
- Internationalisation

Under each of these 5 areas the Plan describes desired outcomes, objectives and strategies, performance indicators and an indication of who it is within the School that is primarily responsible for undertaking the leadership to make the actions happen.

In 2011, at the time of writing this Plan, the School had the following:

- Four School Committees: Executive Committee; Research Committee; Education Committee; Community Engagement and International Committee:
- Reported student load of 1150 EFTSL;
- 18 courses and 3 BA majors;
- 60 postgraduate research degree students;
- 53 staff members;
- 18 adjunct staff;
- Growing research outputs;
- Extensive community engagement reflecting the enabling spirit of the School.

Oversight and Monitoring of the Operation Plan

The Operational Plan is the responsibility of all members of staff across the School of Social and Policy Studies, and all staff members are encouraged to identify the relevant priorities for their work. The Dean of the School will report to the School and the Executive Dean of the Faculty on progress against the Performance Indicators twice a year and the plan will be revised at the end of 2012 and 2013 accordingly. The School Executive will also evaluate the progress of the plan and this will be a standing item at relevant meetings. The Operational Plan will inform the work of the School’s committees, and Committee Chair’s will give regular feedback on progress to the School Dean.
DISCIPLINE MISSIONS

Sociology

Flinders Sociology is one of the premier sociology disciplines in Australia with an intensive research culture, eminent staff and an international student body. Flinders Sociology has played an important role in shaping the course of social research and policy in Australia. Now, at its 30-year anniversary, Flinders Sociology continues its rigorous research culture and engagement with public policy issues.

Social Work, Social Planning

The discipline has for almost 40 years provided quality education in the area of Social Work, and more recently in Social Planning and in Loss, Grief and Trauma. The discipline mission is to educate students in the critical analysis, administration and implementation of social welfare policies and services. It aims to foster imagination and lateral thinking in the exercising of judgements which can be applied flexibly and credibly in macro and micro situations while working towards social justice. The quality of educational standards and the competence of social work and social planning graduates lie in their abilities to demonstrate the logical and systematic application of clearly delineated knowledge and values within the context of social welfare structures. Social Work aims to practise the values that are taught and to engage with others in pursuing a more just society. The discipline is active in community engagement as it seeks to contribute to building supportive communities. These values also inform research which focuses on understanding and responding to social issues and positioning welfare services and service delivery into the future.

Politics and Public Policy

Among the first disciplines established at Flinders in the late 1960s staff built the reputation of political studies at Flinders as among the most respected in the nation. Commitment to excellence in teaching and curriculum development, research, preparedness to comment in the media on political events and contributing to the professional advancement of Australian political science are all hallmarks of the discipline’s contribution. Opportunities to study overseas as part of the degree program is actively encouraged as are internships which combine the development of practical skills with academic study.

The degree programs offered range from undergraduate to postgraduate and are taught by staff deeply committed to assisting students gain the most from their University experience and, moreover, in the friendly and unpretentious environment that defines study at Flinders University.
Women’s Studies

As an interdisciplinary area of study Women’s Studies uses an Australian focus to examine the role of gender in past and present society and culture, and uses an international focus to address issues in feminist theory and gender relations in developing societies. Women’s Studies addresses the broad question of how gender (social definitions of femininity and masculinity) operates, both in contemporary life and historically, in Australia and in other cultures. Gender, intersecting with other social orders of difference (principally race, class and sexuality) shapes culture and social institutions, as well as personal identity and relationships. Women’s Studies reflect this wide scope by including social, cultural and political perspectives.

The School is also the base for the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management

Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management (FIPPM) is a centre for research and consultancy in public policy development and implementation; program evaluation; professional practice; organisational development and change; service user perspectives; the inter-relationships between state, market and civil society; community and social development and role of non-governmental public action. FIPPM was created in 1993, conducting applied research and consultancy for government and non-government agencies as well as taking responsibility for the Graduate Program in Public Administration.
## Organisational Systems and Culture

### Flinders University Strategy: Key Strategy

**KS7: Valuing our People** by supporting and encouraging all staff to achieve the highest level of performance, deliver our vision and adapt the changes required.

**KS9: Improving our Financial Capacity** by ensuring that our available resources are increased and used in the most effective and efficient ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Objectives and Action Strategies</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A respectful School culture of exchange and support | **Objective:**

1. *Increase the effectiveness of School administrative systems and processes*
2. *Develop a respectful and supportive School organisational culture*
3. *Improve the School’s financial position*

**Strategies:**

1. Improve effectiveness of School administrative systems and processes;
2. Timely implementation of a workload equalisation model;
3. Continue to improve communication systems across the School including web based communication and a regular news bulletin;
4. Use the School intranet to make available School committee minutes and policy documents;
5. Facilitate the take up by administrative staff of opportunities for staff development;
6. School marketing plan developed by June 2012;
7. Advocate School facility improvement needs at University level. | Staff retention  
Equalisation of workloads  
Staff satisfaction expressed through performance reviews  
Financial position at the end of 2012 | Dean, School Manager, HOD's |
Teaching

Flinders University Strategy: Key Strategy

KS2: Enhancing educational opportunities through innovative and flexible entry pathways, a relevant and dynamic course profile, and improving the retention and progression of students
KS3: Enhancing the student experience by showing respect for their views and care for their welfare, by providing effective support services, and by maintaining a lively campus culture
KS4: Valuing quality in teaching as an unwavering commitment and a defining characteristic of Flinders


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Objectives and Strategies</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student focused quality education | **Objective:**  
1. To provide high quality education in all the School disciplines  
2. To reduce attrition from first to second semester and from first year to second year in all courses but especially at undergraduate level | Student assessment of quality as measured by SETS and graduate surveys  
% First Year Attrition  
Outcomes of 5 year course reviews  
Accreditation outcomes for Social Work Courses | Dean; HOD’s, Education Committee, Chair of the Education Committee; Directors of Studies and Honours convenor. |

**Strategies:**

1. Improve the quality delivery of distance education and online material;
2. Initiatives in place to support greater uptake in completion of SETS and Course relevant student feedback-consultative mechanisms;
3. At School level identify and develop comprehensive methods of supporting ‘at risk students’ and first year students;
4. At School level and throughout the disciplines actively facilitate student access to University wide and Faculty student learning resources;
5. Continue to facilitate access to high quality WIL, such as student placements and internships, including social work placements within the southern suburbs and regional areas;
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Enhance Honours student numbers and through the honours convenors develop ways to improve the Honours student experience;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Have in place School quality postgraduate higher degree progression and support systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The School delivers relevant and dynamic courses**

**Objective:**

*The School delivers relevant core disciplinary knowledge and dynamic courses*

**Strategies:**

1. Disciplines continue to ensure that core and latest academic research and scholarly understandings in the discipline inform the delivery of courses;
2. Maintain educational and learning standards as per any relevant accreditation bodies where this is necessary, i.e. in social work and social planning;
3. School courses have functioning Course Management Committees;
4. Maintain industry liaison where appropriate in order to provide for relevance in course profiles;
5. Consideration of whole of School topics where appropriate;
6. Develop the Graduate Certificate in Local Government in 2012;
7. Market (through web based and other mechanisms) existing School Undergraduate Courses and Graduate Certificates and Diplomas;
8. Promote closer articulation with TAFE and VET sector, including through the identification of credit pathways, as a regular and continuing activity;
9. Implement recommendations from internal Course Reviews and Accreditation reviews in a timely manner.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student assessment of quality as measured by SETS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student enrolment, attrition and retention rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcomes of 5 year course reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accreditation outcomes for Social Work Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers of staff engaging in teaching peer review each year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dean; HOD’s, Education Committee, Chair of the Education Committee and Directors of Studies.
| **Students within the School**<br>graduate as critical thinkers | **Objective:**<br>Ensure that students, who study in the disciplines within the School, engage in critical traditions with a focus on, and awareness of gender inclusion and social diversity and inequality. | **Strategies:**<br>1. Teaching staff support students to engage in development of a critical disposition within the traditions of their studied disciplines;<br>2. Active School mechanisms are in place to monitor the C2R2 curriculum developments;<br>3. The School promotes the Flinders University graduate qualities through the activities of the School Education committee; | **References to critical thinking in relevant topic guidelines and educational aims**<br>Outcomes of 5 year course reviews<br>Accreditation outcomes for Social Work Courses | Dean; HOD’s, Education Committee, Chair of the Education Committee and Directors of Studies. |

| **The School is known as a stimulating and reflective educational environment** | **Objective:**<br>To continue to develop a stimulating and reflective School teaching culture | **Strategies:**<br>1. Quality assurance mechanisms are in place, including the timely use of SET feedback in reflection, peer review and positive adaptations in teaching;<br>2. Staff Development and Training Unit is active with the School community in exchange of ideas, reflections and effective practices about teaching and learning;<br>3. Supports are in place for those delivering first year teaching topics;<br>4. Support the uptake of new technological aids for teaching;<br>5. Support applications for teaching and learning related grants and awards;<br>6. Ensure that new staff to the School attend University level teaching programs;<br>7. Staff members are supported to use their research to inform and illustrate teaching. | **% General Agreement Student Evaluation of Teaching (Topic)**<br>% Graduate General Agreement on Good Teaching | Dean; HOD’s, Education Committee, Chair of the Education Committee and Directors of Studies. |
## Research

### Flinders University Strategy: Key Strategy

KS5: Focusing research - “On those who are research active or have the potential to be, and on high quality targeted and collaborative research and research training that makes a difference”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Objectives and Strategies</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **ERA Excellence:** inspiring, quality and influential research throughout the School Disciplines. | **Objective:**  
*Increase the School’s strategic approach to quality research*  
**Strategies:**  
1. Strategic thinking and monitoring by the SSPS Research Committee on how to support and nurture the development of the School research environment;  
2. School ERA Planning Process is resourced. | | SSPS Research Committee Chair; Dean; Director of FIPPM; HODs. |
| **ERA Excellence:** inspiring, quality and influential research throughout the School Disciplines. | **Objective:**  
*School structures and supports for research activity operate smoothly in 2012 and continuously improved.*  
**Strategies:**  
1. Development of School wide structures to foster and support staff in sustained research activity.  
2. School resources allocated on an annual basis to support research activity through the various School Research Schemes, and employment of designated School research support staff; | | SSPS Research Committee Chair; Dean; Director of FIPPM; HODs. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Books &amp; Journals Publication Points per Total Academic Staff FTE</strong></th>
<th><strong>SSPS Research Committee Chair; Dean; Director of FIPPM; HODs.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased research collaborations external to the University that advance the School’s goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Strategic use of the School Visiting Fellowship Scheme to promote collaborations and the identity of the School;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strategic liaison with other organisations and universities where areas of common interest have been identified and where research collaborations could be pursued.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement in the School Research Data Management and Reporting Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. School processes to support the timely entry of research publication data;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School Agreement negotiated with the Faculty about access to their research supports;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. School data base maintained of grants obtained and grant applications by School members;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School data base maintained of post graduate student details of candidature and School research funds granted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines and the School widely known for their research strengths</td>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strategies:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the promotion and visibility of School and discipline research</td>
<td>1. Promotion of the research profile of the Disciplines and School across the University and the wider public (i.e. through website, podcasts, brochures etc.); 2. Regular School Research Seminars and public talks; 3. The creation and maintenance of an inspiring and engaging School research webpage; 4. Development of media profiles and media training for active researchers;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An effective Postgraduate Research Student Program</th>
<th><strong>Objective:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategies:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement of the School post graduate systems</td>
<td>1. Efficient, quality School-Discipline systems to support admission and progression of post graduate students; 2. Systems and supports in place for welcoming and orientating post graduate research students; 3. Information about potential research supervision/research areas accessible through School research website; 4. School wide post graduate student conference on an annual basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|  |
|---|---|
| School Disciplines/ research entities listed as University research strength. | Positive post graduate students satisfaction | Increased numbers of post graduate students |

|  |
|---|---|
| SSPS Research Committee Chair; Dean; Director of FIPPM; HODs. | SSPS Research Committee Chair; Dean; Director of FIPPM; HODs. |
Community Engagement

Flinders University Strategy: Key Strategy

KS1: Building Supportive Communities by being outwardly engaged, with strong links to our stakeholders and serving the communities in which we operate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Objectives and Strategies</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Enabling community engagement | **Objective:** Continue to strengthen discipline and School focused community engagement and professional service | **Strategies:**

1. Support a School culture that facilitates discipline relevant community engagement;
2. Continue to develop discipline relevant work integrated learning opportunities;
3. Strengthen quality and increase numbers of social work and social planning placement options;
4. Develop School initiatives for community engagement;
5. Foster and support alumni groups;
6. Increase the School’s focus in the Southern suburbs, through Schools and capacity building support to community organisations;
7. Maintain liaison with the Office of the Southern Knowledge Transfer;
8. Continue financial contributions to SA Policy Online;
9. Maintain industry liaison and community mechanisms with community based and service partners | Partnerships developed and maintained  
WIL evaluations  
Social work student placement numbers as a ratio of placements available | SSPS School community; Community Engagement and International Committee and Chair; Dean; HOD’s and all staff |
### Internationalisation

**Flinders University Strategy: Key Strategy**

KS6: *Strengthening Internationalisation* by expanding opportunities and benefits for students, staff, and our communities to engage in the global community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Objectives and Strategies</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Improve the School’s International profile | **Objective:**  
*Develop a strategic approach in the area of internationalisation in teaching.* | | |
| Create an enriched student experience for International Students. | **Strategies:**  
1. Develop a School International Plan;  
2. Identify School wide activities that promote the International Student experience;  
3. Act on the information obtained by the Exit Survey of International Students;  
4. Drawing of the models in existence within Disciplines create a School wide mentoring system for International Students;  
5. Develop a relationship with School and International Alumni;  
6. Promote the School’s International links through research;  
7. Ensure ESOS compliance; | International Plan developed  
Monitoring and responsiveness to data from Exit Survey of International Students  
Enrolment, attrition and retention rates for international students. | SSPS School; Community Engagement and International Committee and Chair; Dean; HOD |