Purpose

To change the University's Student Enrolment Load Policy with respect to student enrolment overloads to allow students to enrol in up to 42 units per year or 21 units per semester without special approval.

Background

The University's Student Enrolment Load currently states that:

Students who wish to enrol in a topic or topics additional to the standard workload [36 units] must seek approval from the staff member responsible for approval of their programs.

Students are currently unable to self-enrol in an approved overload, unless the maximum number of units that students can undertake is increased for the course (and therefore for all students in that course).

As part of the web enrolment pilot project, a large number of individual student requests to overload were received and these required lengthy follow-up to seek approval for the overloads and enrol the students appropriately, as students are unable to self-enrol in an approved overload.

It was noted that the majority of these requests were for relatively small overloads (e.g. 3 units in a semester) and were approved by the relevant faculty. Given this, the review of the web enrolment pilot project recommended a change to the University’s Student Enrolment Load Policy to streamline approval of routine, small overloads.

In discussions with Faculty representatives on the Student One Faculty Reference Group, it was agreed that the University’s Student Enrolment Load Policy should be amended to allow students to enrol in up to 42 units per year without special approval.

This change is consistent with the approach approved by Vice-Chancellor's Committee on 7 July 2004 that "the University will offer opportunities for students to obtain program advice, and may require program approval at certain stages, but students will be advised that they have final responsibility for their enrolment choices."

Other editorial changes are proposed below for consistency with this approach and the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

New reports have been developed which will allow Faculty staff to monitor student enrolment load, particularly for students in combined degrees programs.

The proposed changes to the Student Enrolment Load Policy are set out below.
Policy change

The following change to the Student Enrolment Load Policy is proposed:

1 Student Load

A unit is the measure of weighting given to a topic as specified in the syllabus for that topic. A normal year’s work by a full-time student is valued at 36 units. Awards are structured around this principle and the amount of HECS and other charges to international and local students, student contributions, tuition fees and student services fees are based on the basis that 36 units represents a standard full-time load. Such standard loads operate in the students' best interests, allowing them to perform well in their studies without dispersing their efforts too much across a large number of topics.

2 Overload

Notwithstanding this, in some circumstances it may be appropriate for some students to enrol in a combination of topics which amounts to more than 36 units in any year and corresponds to an academic overload. Students will be permitted to enrol in more than the standard workload in any semester only where they are able to demonstrate that they have the ability to undertake the additional topics successfully.

Student Overload comprises those topics which students take in any year which are in excess of the standard workload of 36 units. Normally the maximum workload for which a student may enrol in any year will be 48 units spread evenly over the two semesters. Students must pay any fees and charges associated with the additional load.

Procedures for Student Overload

3 Students may enrol in a topic or topics comprising more than 36 units, but not more than 42 units, in any year without special approval.

Students who wish to enrol in a topic or topics additional to the standard workload comprising more than 42 units in any year must seek approval from the staff member responsible for approval of variations to their programs. The student must indicate:

3.1 the topics in which they seek enrolment;
3.2 the results of previous study in the University;
3.3 reasons for wishing to take the overload.

The relevant staff member with responsibility for program approval will:

4.1 examine the student's overall academic record in relation to the stated reasons for the student wishing to take the overload;
4.2 take into account the student's previous academic record in considering the appropriateness of authorising the overload in terms of the policy;
4.3 having checked the student's record, either authorise or refuse the application by endorsing the applicant's enrolment or amendment to enrolment form, except that any authorisation of a workload in excess of 48 units per year or 24 units per semester, is to be subject to further endorsement by the Executive Dean of the Faculty or nominee.

Recommendation

That Academic Senate endorse the proposed changes to the Student Enrolment Load Policy, as set out above, and recommend them to Council for approval.

SJ:MM
5 November 2004