

Departments and Schools – Development, Renaming and Approval Guidelines

Title of Parent Policy

Departments and Schools – Establishment, Renaming and Approval Policy

Preamble

The establishment of a new department or school is now a relatively infrequent occurrence at Monash University. The range of disciplines and areas of study that the University deems it appropriate to offer, having regard to demand for places and the offerings of other tertiary institutions in the countries in which it operates, is reasonably settled. Occasionally, the University will resolve to add a new discipline, either something completely new or an extension of existing offerings – as for example the addition of architecture in the Faculty of Art and Design in 2008. More frequently, however, the need for a new organisational unit will result from the evolution of a discipline over time or the maturing of the organisational structure at one of the newer campuses. In both cases any proposal for a new department or school is likely to have an extended period of gestation, allowing ample time for discussion at a variety of levels across the University.

Less infrequent than the development of a new department or school is the renaming of an existing department or school. This may result from a shift in emphasis within a discipline or the growth of, for example, a combined school involving multiple faculties to the point where it is appropriate to split one or more components into an independent entity.

The definitions of ‘department’ and ‘school’ in *Statute 1.1 – Interpretation* and the text of *Statute 2.3 – The faculties* and the regulations made pursuant thereto do not provide guidance on how the two terms are to be used. ‘Department’ generally is used in relation to a single discipline area, for example the Department of Economics. ‘School’ is used variously for a grouping of related studies, for example the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, and for a regional division of a faculty, for example the Caulfield School of Information Technology, the School of Applied Media and Social Sciences at Gippsland or the School of Engineering at Sunway. Other usages are also found, however: Science has single discipline ‘schools’ of chemistry and physics. Faculties should use whichever term best fits faculty and campus usage and their understanding of the proposed organisational unit’s intended area of study.

These guidelines do not prescribe how proposals should be framed, but rather highlight a range of issues that each proposal will need to cover.

The Proposal – Issues for Consideration

Not all the issues discussed below will be applicable in every case, but any proposal coming before a faculty board should cover (but need not be limited to) as many of the following issues as are appropriate:

Alignment with Strategic Directions

The proposed organisational unit needs to be a good “fit” with the strategic directions of the University and of the faculty (or faculties) involved.

Campus Profile

There should be a clear indication of support from each of the campuses at which the organisational unit is to operate.

Research, Research Training and Education Profile

The following points should be substantiated in respect of each country in which the proposed organisational unit is to operate –

- some evidence of community/industry support for the proposal
- market research on demand for proposed new disciplines and competition from other institutions
- evidence that the proposed organisational unit will meet a need for research and/or education that is not currently met by existing academic structures in the University
- evidence that the proposed organisational unit has in place, or has plans to establish, an appropriate infrastructure for research training according to the Code of Practice for Supervision, which will include appropriately accredited supervisors, a regular seminar program and other minimum resources and facilities for the training of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students

- opportunities for research collaboration with other faculties, institutions, industry, community organisations and government
- a clear outline of any new courses/specialisations/units which the new organisational unit will offer or to which it will make a significant contribution
- a clear delineation of how the organisational unit will contribute to existing offerings

Resources

- staffing at start-up and during the growth to steady state
- the availability of student load to support proposed programs
- research, research training and teaching infrastructure, including space for offices, research and teaching and HDR students
- impacts on University, centrally provided resources
- a budget model demonstrating that the proposed organisational unit will become financially viable within an acceptable period from start-up, making a strong case for its initial operation at a loss, if that is a likely outcome, and affirming the willingness of the faculty (or faculties) to carry any initial loss

Timetable

The proposal should include a timetable for the organisational unit's start-up and progression to steady state.

The issues identified above are particularly relevant to proposals for a new organisational unit, but many are likely to be considered also in the development of proposals to rename an organisational unit. A proposal for renaming should provide a clear explanation of the change factors underlying the proposal and of its implications for other organisational units, teaching and research/research training activities, community engagement, etc.

The Process

Discussions

Deans should discuss any proposed development of this kind with the Vice-Chancellor and President at a very early stage. Further discussion with the Senior Management Team (Extended) is likely. At the faculty level the implications of the establishment of the proposed new entity for other departments, schools, faculties, campuses, centres and institutes need to be fully canvassed in discussions. This will be particularly important in the event that a proposed new organisational unit brings together interests covering more than one faculty.

Faculties need to be aware of the different roles and responsibilities pertaining at the President-led campuses. Any development at one of these campuses will necessarily be a partnership between the faculty (or faculties) concerned and the campus since, while academic leadership of the new or renamed entity is the responsibility of the faculty, resourcing and non-academic aspects of management are the province of the Pro Vice-Chancellor and President of the campus. In such cases proposals will need the endorsement of relevant senior governance bodies at the President-led campus prior to submission to the faculty board (or boards).

Approval

The proposal needs to be approved by the faculty board (or boards) concerned, then by the Academic Board and then by the University Council.

HDR program proposals will need approval from the governing body for university HDR programs (currently the Research Graduate School Committee).

Post Approval Issues

Issues that will need to be considered include:

- the search for a suitable academic leader to head and to develop the organisational unit, and initial staff appointments
- the establishment of a resource management framework
- amendment of the faculty's schedule to the Faculties regulations to include the new organisational unit
- amendment of degree regulations to encompass any new programs
- amendment of the Faculty Awards regulations to encompass any new programs

- the timing of an initial review of the department or school – usually within two years of start-up – and a commitment to ongoing review in accordance with the University's [Academic Review Policy](#) and [Procedures](#)

Responsibility

Vice-Chancellor and President

Senior Management Team (Extended)

Deans

Faculty Board(s)

RGSC