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THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING SCIENCE

**ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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**Abstract**

With a high staff turnover and a heavy academic load the Department of Computing Science has to make an effort to provide some continuity and consistency in its administrative structure for the management of academic affairs. This paper summarizes the administrative structure of the department and the responsibilities of staff members.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are three broad categories of staff in the department. These are: academic staff, technical staff and office staff. The department is responsible for the teaching, content matter and marking of all courses given by the department. It must maintain records of marks for several years because students and employers may request references from the department for coursework done several years ago under a lecturer who may no longer be with the department.

The department is responsible for a substantial amount of correspondence inside and outside the university. The department is represented on several committees, faculties, working parties and other bodies inside and outside the university.

The department involves itself into research projects (e.g. the ARGC omnibus proposal or UNIX or Cambridge Ring). It takes on projects to improve the knowledge of Computing Science in the region or all of Australia (e.g. our summer schools for high school students and university graduate students). The administration of such projects must be set up so that it can be done with a minimum of effort but more importantly so that proper accounting for the activity (e.g. annual report) can be performed easily and a repetition of the activity can pick up the whole administrative setup and so expend an order of magnitude less energy than the original effort. Unfortunately we have so far not done this. Hence every South Coast Summer School has taken at least as much effort as the previous one.

The department is responsible for sensible and effective deployment of considerable resources. Including income from all sources we have spent for the last three years on the average about \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year on equipment and about \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year on housekeeping. These are substantial amounts which have so far mostly gone into the development of our undergraduate laboratories. In the future we can expect that more funding can be devoted to the development of research facilities and dedicated special purpose laboratories. This will require careful fiscal planning and budgeting but although everyone complains about the university's budget system, no one in the department has found the time to produce a better departmental finance system. Such a system may even be available on one of the UNIX distribution tapes which we already have.

The department is responsible for a log of all important activities which is presented to the university council once a year as an annual report. Monthly reports by support staff contain information concerning activities on research and development projects. Academic staff who travel, give seminars and lectures, write papers and do other things should notify the departmental office.

The department is responsible for publicity and documentation of its activities so that students, the public at large and other scholars in computing science are adequately and properly informed of what we are doing and what we have accomplished. The department publishes a graduate student handbook and contributes to the Faculty of Mathematics handbook. Orientation material is produced for enrolling and re enrolling students and for schools and members of the public who visit the department. The department publishes a preprint series containing scientific papers, best student project reports, software or hardware development reports and other results of lasting significance.

The department is responsible for the provision of complete and well presented documentation in every laboratory on every aspect of programming, hardware or anything else with which users of the laboratory may be concerned. In 1979 our laboratory was exemplary in this area. With the larger student numbers of today the department needs to rethink and reorganize the presentation of laboratory documentation.

The department started to maintain a departmental resource collection in 1981. Contained in the collection are notes, reports, preprints and other difficult to obtain materials in the main research areas of the department. The department subscribes to a number of key journals, most of which should be read regularly by any practicing computing scientist. The department exchanges preprints with other universities. These enable us to have up to date knowledge on the state of art in research where journal publications lag research by two to three years. Original copies of student reports and minor theses are kept in the departmental resource collection.

The above paragraphs have outlined the broad scope of the administrative problems. Subsequent sections will discuss each aspect in more detail.

## **2. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES**

This section briefly outlines the responsibilities and privileges of each category of departmental staff.

### **2.1. Academic Staff**

Academic staff are responsible for departmental research and teaching. Academic staff are expected to have up to date knowledge of departmental procedures, laboratory systems and in depth knowledge of at least one area of computing science. To keep such knowledge up to date academic staff are expected to give and attend seminars; attend conferences to learn new ideas and to present research results. Current departmental policy on conference attendance is (within the bounds of available finances):

- (i) one conference per year anywhere in Australia with all expenses paid if attendee gives a paper or a grant-in-aid covering the registration fee and as much as possible of the transportation or accommodation costs.
- (ii) grant-in-aid for additional conferences where a paper is to be presented to cover as much as the costs as possible within the bounds of available finances and with due regard to remaining commitments in (i) above.
- (iii) University policy states that overseas conferences cannot be financed from departmental housekeeping. A direct application must be made to the University Secretary for overseas travel funds. The available grant-in-aid is rather small and normally only available if a participant is to give a paper or has some other substantial involvement in the organisation of the conference.

Academic staff participate in departmental administration at the request of the Departmental Chairman. It is the Chairman's responsibility to distribute the administrative load fairly and equitably. It is every academic's duty to put the same effort, thought and imagination into

administrative duties as into teaching and research. It is neither desirable nor possible for the Chairman to presolve every administrative problem or design and develop every procedure in full detail. Once a departmental standard of quality is accepted by the department all administrative solutions should reach or exceed the departmental standard of quality. Such a standard is essential in an understaffed department because it ensures that a second occurrence of a similar problem takes at least an order of magnitude less effort to solve it. Most administrative problems are repetitive.

Leave records of academic staff are kept by the department. Annual leave for academics is a concept not very well defined in staff rules and regulations. It seems that up to one month per annum is a reasonable amount of annual leave for academics. This should be taken whenever it does not interfere with teaching duties. No more than one year's entitlement of annual leave can be accumulated. Further accumulation of annual leave is lost.

Study leave may be taken for 6 months after every 3 years of service or for 12 months after every 6 years of service. Study leave is supported by a substantial travel assistance grant from the university. Study leave approval is subject to the ability of the remaining staff to cover the absence. No additional funds are granted to the department for academics absent on study leave. In an understaffed department it is essential to plan study leave absences well in advance. Even then it may not be possible to meet all requests at the requested times. An additional difficulty is the university-wide ceiling of no more than 7 to 8% of staff on overseas study leave at any one time.

Once departmental teaching and administrative duties are distributed, academics are responsible for their own work schedules to provide enough time for each assigned task as well as for research and further studies. As a consequence academics do not submit monthly reports or time sheets but for the sake of better public relations and to satisfy the needs of our students the office hours and absences of academics should be made known to the departmental office with as much advance notice as possible.

There are two hurdles in the academic career path which are at least as stringent as any number of time sheets and monthly reports: the tenure committee at about 2 to 4 years after initial appointment and the promotions committee after at least 1 year on top of the lecturer range. In order to succeed an academic is expected to be strong in research and competent as a teacher and administrator. Insufficiency in any of the three aspects makes progress difficult or impossible. Excellence in teaching only partly offsets insufficient research. This is a particularly severe problem for understaffed departments because lectures must take place at fixed times while research can always be postponed a little.

*Research and scholarship differentiate a university from other tertiary and secondary educational establishments. The pursuit of truth to and beyond the boundaries of existing knowledge distinguish between an academic from an educator. Research is the essence of a university and cannot be neglected no matter how much circumstances and conditions are stacked against it.*

## **2.2. Administrative Responsibilities of Academic Staff**

At the University of Wollongong, the departments are the basic administrative units. Faculties have few administrative functions. Faculty secretaries are not equipped with space, staff or equipment to handle financial or student records. Departments, regardless of size, have only one secretary. In departments with staff in excess of 10, administrative functions have to be shared among academics. It is not possible for the Chairman to run the department without the delegation of a substantial portion of the administrative tasks. This section describes the administrative structure of the Department of Computing Science.

### **2.2.1. Deputy Chairman**

- Acting Chairman in absence of Chairman.
- Departmental image, presence and representation to the outside world.

- \* research presentations
- \* open day
- \* school's day
- \* summer school
- \* Friends of the University and other organizations.

#### **2.2.2. Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for the orderly spending of departmental resources using a financial management system (if there is one available).

- reconciliation of financial records
- departmental financial system
- preparation of draft budget
- overseeing that departmental purchases and commitments are within budget and to ensure insertion of correct account number onto purchase requests
- financial report at departmental meetings
- draft of new equipment request list each year (in consultation with other academics and support staff)
- draft of minor works list each year (in consultation with other academics and support staff).

#### **2.2.3. Librarian**

- departmental resource collection
  - \* books
  - \* periodicals
  - \* preprints
  - \* project reports and theses of department's students
- editor, preprint series
- exchange of preprints with other universities
- access and borrowing mechanism for department's collection
- responsible for proper documentation in laboratories, workshops and computer room to ensure that all activities of the department are adequately documented.

#### **2.2.4. Undergraduate Coordinator**

- coordinate activities of lecturers of first year, second year and third year subjects to avoid clashing assignment deadlines
- Check for excessive or insufficient amount of work in lectures
- suggest quotas if and when necessary

#### **2.2.5. Graduate Coordinator**

- assist graduate students to find suitable projects
- review of course work components of a proposed degree when student first enrolls
- discussions with graduate students on progress in the course at commencement and termination of each semester
- assist students in finding supervisors for project work

#### **2.2.6. Seminar Coordinator**

- organize departmental seminars and short courses of lectures
- within the limits of departmental budget invite outside speakers

- organize seminars by graduate students
- coordinate with Project Supervisors the seminars for student projects.
- responsible for the seminar, lecture and conference section of the annual report.

Seminar notices must be issued at least two weeks before each seminar. Complete programme for each semester or at least each half semester should be made in advance covering about one half of available time slots. Unforeseen results or visitors can then be accommodated in the free time slots.

#### **2.2.7. Honours Coordinator**

- responsible for the selection of suitable subjects and a suitable project topic and supervisor for each Honours student.
- Acts as the focal point for the Honours student group of each academic year.

#### **2.2.8. Departmental Representative on Committees and Faculties**

- Attends meetings of the Committee or Faculty
- Reports to departmental meetings and to departmental Chairman on any events that may affect the department.
- Responsible for the updating of the departmental file on that Committee or Faculty with minutes, agenda papers and any other useful documents.

### **2.3. Support Staff**

#### **2.3.1. Technical Staff**

A Professional Officer is normally a university graduate with specialist skills in an area where academic staff need support. Professional Officers must perform independently and confidently under the general guidance of the Department Chairman or an academic staff member selected by the Department Chairman. A Technical Officer or a Laboratory Assistant will normally work under close and detailed supervision by a Professional Officer or academic staff member.

A Project Officer is essentially a research position for technical staff. A person appointed as a Project Officer has shown independent thought and exceptional performance of the highest order. A Project Officer is expected to work for the maximum benefit to his own work and to the department with minimal guidance and consultation with the Chairman.

Technical staff do not have to overcome the hurdles of tenure and promotions committee (see academic staff). Hence all technical staff except Project Officers are requested to submit monthly reports to the Chairman specifying what was done, how long it took and what difficulties were encountered in achieving the desired objectives.

Technical staff in the Department of Computing Science are divided into two groups with almost no overlapping technical skills: software staff and hardware staff.

Working conditions of technical staff are governed by industrial awards. Hence recreation leave, sick leave records are kept by the administration and working hours in principle follow a fixed pattern. The department has no resources for overtime payments hence any activities outside normal working hours (as required by the 24 hour operation of our laboratories) must be arranged on a "time off in lieu" basis.

##### **2.3.1.1. Software Staff**

Responsible for the maintenance of all departmental software that is declared as such by the Chairman. There is obviously more software in the world than any number of support staff can maintain. Hence it is the duty of academics to help software staff with the task to evaluate new software and to recommend to the Chairman what software should be supported by the department.

Software staff is also responsible for the development of new software as required for teaching or research projects. Again, academics must help in a major way if we intend to proceed with development at a reasonable speed.

Until we can persuade the Computer Centre to help us, software staff are responsible for the running of the time sharing terminal systems. This involves: maintenance of general system integrity; storage and summaries of accounting information; regular backup of all files; opening or closing of accounts for students who are joining or leaving the Computing Science programme.

#### **2.3.1.2. Hardware Staff**

Responsible for the maintenance of all departmental hardware and for the design and development of new hardware components or interfaces or devices as required by teaching and research projects. Must decide the in-house versus outside advantages of each such development, such projects often involve expensive tools and skills that are not available in-house.

Responsible for the departmental workshop and technical information data base.

### **2.3.2. Office Staff**

#### **2.3.2.1. Departmental Secretary**

Responsible for the departmental file system; departmental copy- key and records; departmental typing; time sheet submission for casual staff, Chairman's appointments to ensure that the Chairman is not continuously disturbed, that all relevant documents are in the Chairman's hands for each appointment and that the Chairman is aware of all deadlines by which certain administrative actions must be taken.

The secretary date stamps and delivers incoming mail and is responsible for the department's stationery store, copier paper supply and petty cash fund.

The secretary answers departmental telephone calls and responds to routine public relations or information gathering requests.

As the first and often last contact person between the outside world and the department the secretary must at all times be aware that the public image of the department depends to a very large extent on her availability, helpfulness and friendly disposition. It is therefore essential to fix the working hours of the secretary in a one secretary department to exactly the same pattern each day so that the public can grow accustomed to the periods when they can be certain to make contact with the department. There is nothing more devastating to good public relations than the sheer frustration caused by being unable to contact anyone during reasonable office hours. Hence the secretary is required to sign the time book on arrival and departure and is responsible for the maintenance of the time book in the departmental office.

#### **2.3.2.2. Administrative Assistant**

The Administrative Assistant is a graduate and a competent administrator who assists the Departmental Chairman with all administrative matters concerning the department. In particular the Administrative Assistant is responsible for:

- marks book; student records
- course outline record
- minutes of departmental meetings
- preparation of draft annual report
- other reports, statistics and questionnaires



- timetable coordination
- administration of part-time laboratory supervisors
- administration of other part-time staff
- administrate the selection of students in subjects with quotas
- selection of students who are entering the university
- academic advice to students
- prepare calendar entries
- prepare undergraduate handbook
- collect and compile course and subject changes each year and prepare the submission to the Faculty Planning Committee.
- maintain student data base
- prepare class lists
- correlate departmental class lists with administration class lists
- sign addition and withdrawal of subject forms
- handle all written enquiries about graduate study
- check academic suitability of applicants, particularly from overseas, and recommend accordingly to the Chairman
- advise both intending and existing students about programmes of study, research in the department, etc.
- prepare the department's graduate handbook
- organise the timetable for graduate subjects
- maintain the department's file system of present and past graduate students
- maintenance of the department's student data base for graduate students
- prepare graduate subject descriptions and edit calendar entries

#### **2.4. Casual Staff**

Casual staff may be employed in the teaching programme or under research contracts over a wide range of skills and abilities from student assistants to visiting professors.

Staff member employing casual staff is responsible for their temporary employment form and for the fortnightly time sheets.

Casual staff must sign the departmental time book on arrival and departure. If the departmental office is locked signing must be done as soon as possible after the time period worked with a remark by the staff member responsible for the casual staff as to why work outside normal hours was necessary.

Part time tutors follow different procedures and are directly responsible to the Administrative Assistant who provides the necessary paperwork for them.

#### **2.5. Overseas Visitors**

Whenever funds permit, the department invites distinguished computer scientists to spend a short period in the department and to give seminars or a short lecture course on some advanced topic of interest to the department.

The basis for compensation for such visits is normally an airfare plus subsistence during the visitor's stay in Wollongong or airfare plus a honorarium or if the visitor is visiting several Australian universities then a honorarium is paid so that the honorarium from all participating universities adequately compensate the visitor's fares and expenses.

Visitors on study leave from their home university could spend one semester or one whole year here. They could be used in the teaching programme to teach some of our courses in areas where they are experts and in addition contribute to the research work or advanced knowledge of the department. The department should be much more active in this area.

Because of our relative isolation and excessive teaching loads a good flow of overseas expertise through the department is essential if we want to reach the frontiers of knowledge.

### **3. OUTSIDE INCOME**

The current climate of university funding indicates that the department will be poorly resourced for a long time even after it achieves parity with other science based departments in this university. In particular the department has very limited funds for travel (none for overseas travel); personal research equipment and personal research assistants.

Fortunately the main research direction of the department in programming science lends itself to software development work, the products of which, if successful, can be sold on the open market to generate income for the department and for the individual concerned. Such income comes to the department without restrictions on its use for equipment or salaries and it may be used for travelling, research equipment, research assistants or any other reasonable activity that is likely to increase the research or development potential of the department. The ground rules for the disposition of such income are simple and straight forward:

- (i) any income generated by the whole department (as for example in the rental of laboratories to the Technical College) is used by the whole department, controlled by the Chairman on the advice of the departmental committee.
- (ii) any income generated substantially by one or more members of the department goes into a separate account and is controlled by the Chairman primarily on the advice of those members whose work generated the income.
- (iii) if any income is generated substantially by one or more members of the department who did a substantial amount of the necessary work outside normal working hours without extra compensation then the Chairman will try as hard as possible to persuade the University to enter into a contract with the individuals concerned so that a portion of up to say 25% of the income is paid directly to the individuals and the remaining 75% goes into a separate account as for (ii) above.

There is nothing to stop staff members from doing consulting work in their own time but if these activities involve the department's equipment the legal aspects of the situation become complicated. The above scheme has at least one important advantage: All contracting work is performed by the university's lawyers at no cost to any staff member (but at a substantial cost to the department and hence to the above accounts).

Another way to generate external income is from the usual research proposals to the University Research Grants Committee, ARGC, the Computer Board or other research funding institutions.

### **4. WORKLOAD MODEL FOR ACADEMIC STAFF**

The aim of this exercise is to associate numerical weights with each aspect of the academic student-generated workload so that a single integer number can be calculated for each staff member so that its magnitude represents the size of the staff member's academic workload.

As an academic unit let us choose a 6 credit point subject for one session. A 12 credit point subject for the whole year constitutes one academic unit for each session; a 6 credit point two session subject constitutes 0.5 of an academic unit.

For all subjects except for the third year project CSCI321 we have

teaching of one academic unit	60
teaching of one academic unit for the first time	3 x 60 = 180
teaching of one academic unit substantially new lectures	2 x 60 = 120
conducting one 3-hour laboratory session	20
marking of assignments and exams	
interaction with students	
1st year	(number of students) * 1
2nd year	(number of students) * 2
3rd year	(number of students) * 3
Honours/graduate	(number of students) * 4

**Third Year project CSCI321:**

Coordinator	100
one lecture	5
supervision of one group	30
supervision of individual project	40

Project supervision includes evaluation of the projects, at least one group meeting per week; other help as needed by the group; helping with preparation of group seminar presentation; and final report.

I would appreciate comments on the relative values of these somewhat arbitrary numbers. It would be nice if we could adjust them up and down until each one of us accepts that the model gives a reasonable representation of reality.

**5. THE DEPARTMENTAL FILE SYSTEM**

This section will follow.

There will be further sections on other departmental procedures such as purchase request and purchase order handling; budget planning; course planning; course evaluation; recording of what actually happens in each course.

Please make explicit and detailed comments on anything that could be done better or that I have omitted altogether.