2. FCE’S POSITION ON LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

2.1 PRINCIPLES

The Education Committee of the Faculty of Commerce and Economics has endorsed the following Principles underlying its approach to learning and communication:

- Learning and communication are the foundations on which disciplinary or professional education proceeds, and the processes through which such education is enhanced and realised.
- *Staff and students* are drawn together in learning and communication endeavours in courses through which disciplinary or professional education is constructed.
- Learning and communication enhancement and support will operate in disciplinary or professional courses, and will involve both staff and students.

2.2 POLICIES

The following Policies were endorsed to elaborate and realise these Principles.

*The centrality of learning and communication*

Learning and communication are endemic to all educational processes and outcomes. Learning proceeds, and is achieved, through communication and communicative representations. This reality applies no less to disciplinary and professional education.

The learning and communication that is to pertain, however, may be unspecified, misspecified, less than transparent, or less than challenging.

Learning and communication defines the point of engagement of staff and students in educational endeavors. What is to be learnt and how this is to be communicated is a critical outcome of such endeavors, as is the way learning is to proceed and communication is to be implicated in such learning.

With this background, it is not unreasonable to expect the Faculty to specify the learning to be attained/communicated, and how learning is to proceed (implicating communication processes) for each of its programs, disciplines and courses. Such specification will provide the foundation of its educational endeavors.

**POLICY 1:** The Faculty should specify for each of its programs, disciplines and courses (a) the learnings to be attained and how these are to be communicated, and (b) the learning and communication processes through which such attainments are to be achieved.

In establishing such educational outcomes, it is not unreasonable also for the Faculty to be informed about relevant professional expectations or disciplinary and educational best practice, and to structure its educational offerings so that they provide realistic and progressive challenges for students.
**POLICY 2:** The educational outcomes specified for programs, disciplines and courses in the Faculty should provide progressive and realistic challenges for students in addressing professional or disciplinary expectations in ways that are consistent with educational best practice; the basis for, and nature of these challenges should be specified also.

Obviously it is important for the Faculty to determine if it is successful in achieving the outcomes it seeks at program, discipline and subject levels – and whether its success is enhanced or retarded by the learning processes utilised. Such determinations should drive both improvements to educational processes and promulgations of success.

**POLICY 3:** The Faculty should monitor, evaluate and disseminate its progress in attaining the educational outcomes specified for programs, disciplines and subjects, together with the efficacy of educational processes utilised.

### Support for learning

Staff in the Faculty may have difficulties in meeting challenging educational outcomes or accessing best practice educational processes relevant to programs, subjects and disciplines. These difficulties may arise from their prior preparation, awareness of relevant best practice processes, or from structural and systemic issues affecting the learning environment. Moreover, these difficulties are likely to create personal stress and unacceptable workloads for staff if they are not addressed productively, expeditiously and without creating further burdens.

**POLICY 4:** The Faculty should ensure that staff receive appropriate preparation and support for the challenges they face in inducing student learning at specified levels.

Students also may have difficulties in meeting specified and challenging educational outcomes or accessing the educational processes used effectively. These difficulties may arise from their prior preparation, the quality of learning interactions created, or from environmental conditions surrounding the learning situation. These difficulties can create personal stress for students, unacceptable workloads, and a loss of enjoyment or sense of achievement with their educational experience.

**POLICY 5:** The Faculty should ensure that students receive appropriate preparation and support for the learning challenges they face at different stages within their education.

### Contextualising support

Support for learning needs to be provided in the contexts where learning takes place – within the courses and disciplines which make up the programs within which staff and students engage with the enterprise of learning. It is in these contexts that staff and students wish to succeed in their respective roles, where the challenges created may be insufficient, and staff and students may have difficulties in meeting the challenges created. Because success in these contexts significantly affects all involved, it is important to anticipate and address difficulties before they arise, or diagnose and address emergent difficulties as quickly as possible.

**POLICY 6:** The Faculty should devise mechanisms for anticipating or for the early diagnosis of difficulties that might arise from staff and students in its courses, for the purposes of ensuring that support programs are appropriate and targeted.
Each course offered within a discipline or program is likely to introduce a different language (eg; of Economics, Statistics), variant modes of learning, and different types of communication requirement. Learning proceeds, for better or worse, in these contexts, and the success of staff and students is assessed in these contexts. For this reason, learning support for staff and students needs to be provided in these contexts, so that difficulties are alleviated or removed there and learning is enhanced there.

**POLICY 7:** Support for learning should be provided in the contexts where learning proceeds, within the courses, disciplines and programs of the Faculty.

Within a program of study, a developmental progression is to be expected. Students entering a program will start from a platform of expectations that differs from the platform of expectations pertaining in later semesters or years. Students proceed progressively and developmentally through the courses of disciplines; learning builds on learning, inducing different substance and possibly different structures to communication. The challenges offered within courses also are likely to alter in style and substance throughout the duration of a program. Through such progression, talented entrants with high expectations become rounded, competent and fulfilled graduates.

**POLICY 8:** Support for learning should be adapted to the developmental expectations and modes of progression definable for the programs offered by the Faculty; different strategies should be exercised at different stages.

UNSW has claims to be ‘international in perspective’. One aspect of this claim is that its graduates should be fitted for work in a global world. Another is that its students are drawn from across the world, to learn together and from one another how to navigate and contribute to the world.

**POLICY 9:** The Faculty should capitalise on student diversity as a learning resource, through appropriately designed learning processes.