

4. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

4.1 STRUCTURES AND APPROACHES

The undergraduate degrees offered through the Faculty are oriented to the conditions and issues that will affect private and public sector organisations, and professionals and managers in the twenty-first century. Attention will be focused on:

- The rise of a new, knowledge based economic order;
- The globalisation of economic systems, and cross-national and cross-cultural interactions and relationships;
- The transformation of communication and information technologies, and its effects on business and society;
- Issues that will arise for organisations and governments in addressing environmental and community needs, and sustaining local and civil societies.
- New forms of organisations, management and corporate governance – adapted to the needs and ambiguities of the twenty-first century.

The Faculty's undergraduate degrees provide distinctive and substantial forms of education, as disciplinary or research training and as preparation for professional careers. A wide range of disciplines is provided, together with the possibility of majoring in more than one discipline. Flexible combinations of full-time and part-time study are available, a platform of 'core studies' in first year permits some delay in the choice of majors, and both local and overseas gain from well developed induction and support programs within the Faculty. Strong fourth year Honours programs provide research training.

These structural features are supported by the pedagogic approaches used:

- *student choice* dictates the learning path taken through the disciplinary combinations available;
- irrespective of the choices made, the *learning process* is structured so as to produce certain generic graduate outcomes as well as particular disciplinary insights and perspectives;
- whatever the learning path chosen, explicit provision is made for the development of the following types of *generic skill*:
 - English literacy
 - Written, oral and interpersonal communication;
 - Numeracy;
 - Computer literacy; and
 - Information literacy;
- a focus is sustained on *learning* by students, through the use of workshops, tutorials, laboratories, interactive and group exercises, independent research and projects, information and library resources, and computer and web-based technologies;

- *global and cross-cultural perspectives* are developed through subject content and the learning processes used, to prepare graduates for professional and managerial practice in contexts exhibiting difference and diversity;
- across each degree the following *pedagogic strategies* are used to facilitate learning progressively:
 - moving from the concrete to the abstract, by dealing predominantly with observational and descriptive materials in the early stages of courses and disciplinary sequences and with theoretical and methodological materials in later stages;
 - structuring the progressive development of student autonomy, thus guiding the development of intellectual maturity;
 - progressively creating challenges, by asking ‘deeper’ and more rigorous questions of increasingly more complex phenomena;
 - progressively exploring relationships between history and social change, to provide both perspective on contemporary issues and indications of disciplinary and social futures.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The *objectives* of the *Bachelor of Commerce* are:

1. To develop understanding of institutional structures and processes supporting global commerce.
2. To develop disciplinary skills and perspectives relevant to global commerce.
3. To develop professional competences and ethical perspectives relevant to practice in global contexts.
4. To develop understandings of alternative ways in which knowledge can be created and effectively deployed.
5. To develop capacities for life-long learning and the negotiation of change.

The *objectives* of the *Bachelor of Economics* are:

1. To develop understandings of the economic institutions and processes through which commerce is conducted in a global world.
2. To develop disciplinary skills in economics, from a global perspective.
3. To develop understandings of alternative ways in which knowledge can be created and effectively deployed.
4. To develop capacities for life-long learning and the negotiation of change.

4.3 GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Through their involvement in the undergraduate degrees of the Faculty students will develop the capacities to:

- Acquire, critically assess, adapt and use *knowledge* which is relevant to commerce and related social and policy issues.
- Ethically and competently contribute to organisational and professional *practice*;
- Confidently *continue to learn* through diverse interactions, relationships and experiences;
- Use a *global outlook* coupled with *cross-cultural understandings* in developing their careers.

4.4 SKILLS PROFILES

In realising these outcomes graduates will be able to effectively use the following types of skills:

- COMMUNICATION. Communicate, competently and confidently, in
 - Discourses related to policy, ethical or social issues,
 - Expressing or countering arguments or intellectual positions,
 - Expressing personal values and viewpoints,
 - Oral and written forms, and in interpersonal settings.
- INFORMATION LITERACY. Marshall, assess and manage information effectively, from various sources and in varying uses.
- NUMERACY. Use quantitative data and statistical methods appropriately, in addressing problems or issues and in conducting applied research.
- COMPUTER LITERACY. Use computer technologies and information systems, in
 - Acquiring and storing information,
 - Supporting applied research,
 - Supporting presentations and communication.
- APPLIED RESEARCH. Frame, conduct, document and defend applied research related to organisational or professional issues.
- ARGUMENT AND REASONING. Analyse, evaluate and construct arguments using different types of reasoning and evidence.
- SITUATIONAL EXPLORATION. Critically and sensitively decipher situations, in terms of their factual, value, political, historical, and cultural dimensions.
- PROBLEM STRUCTURING AND RESOLUTION. Structure and creatively address typical organisational and professional problems, involving differences in ambiguity, complexity and salience.
- VALUE ORIENTATIONS. Comprehend and creatively negotiate the value frameworks and positions involved in changing situations and resolving problems.
- DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES. Bring critical disciplinary perspectives to bear, in elucidating phenomena and situations.

- **MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES.** Elucidate phenomena or situations through more than one disciplinary ‘lens’.
- **GLOBAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES.** Use frameworks of thought that permit the appreciation of similarities and differences in national, cultural, and international approaches to human and societal concerns.
- **PERSONAL Demeanour.** Use ethical, critical, inquisitive, balanced, and open-minded approaches in personal and professional involvements and contexts.
- **SELF MANAGEMENT.** Exercise autonomy, initiative, self-organisation and self-control in meeting challenges and continuing to learn.
- **COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOUR.** Exercise empathy, respect for others, and team-work in pursuing outcomes and negotiating diverse social processes and situations.

4.5 DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Through exposure to the body of thought of a discipline and the phenomena which it seeks to elucidate, graduates develop many of the skills listed above. They also ‘acquire’ the unique perspective of the discipline, and a critical stance on its value and use. A disciplinary perspective encompasses:

- An appreciation of the conceptual, theoretical and empirical structures underpinning a discipline;
- An understanding of structures and processes of change in the classes of phenomena addressed by the discipline;
- An appreciation of assumptions, limitations, anomalies and disputes in a discipline, and of processes by which these are addressed; and
- A capacity to use a critical disciplinary perspective in seeking to elucidate phenomena and issues.

4.6 RESEARCH SKILLS

In undergraduate Honours Programs, disciplinary perspectives are extended by the development of research skills related to the discipline. The progressive development of discipline related research skills will involve:

- Exposure to the range of research questions tenurable within a discipline;
- Exposure to the range of research methodologies and methods used within the discipline;
- The capacity to ‘produce’ a piece of research, by
 - Reducing ‘researchable questions’ to ‘research problems’,
 - Identifying the conceptual, theoretical and methodological positions and issues related to a ‘research problem’,

- Identifying the nature and accessibility of data relevant to a ‘research problem’,
- Selecting research designs and methods relevant to a ‘research problem’,
- Conducting the selected mode of research in conformity with ‘tenets’ of good research practice,
- Interpreting the outcomes of the research, in the light of its inherent limitations, and
- Reporting the outcomes in a manner acceptable to researchers in the discipline.

4.7 DISCIPLINES AND COURSES

Within the undergraduate degrees of the Faculty, Graduate Outcomes and their associated Skill Profiles are pursued through the major disciplinary sequences offered and their component courses. Multi-disciplinary perspectives are developed by exposure to a number of disciplines, as majors, minors or as electives.

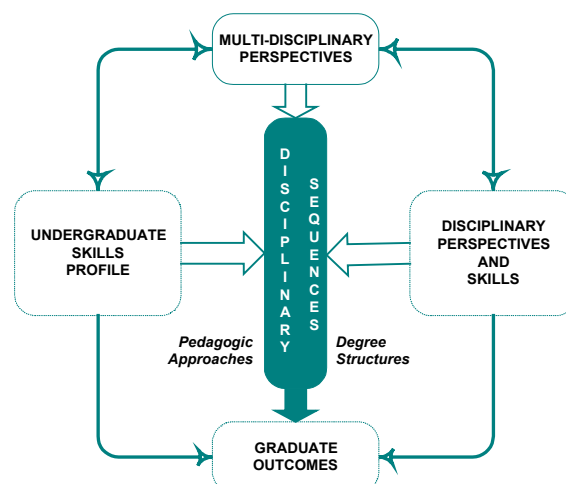
The development of certain skills are associated ‘naturally’ with the development of disciplinary perspectives –

- skills in communication and expression
- critical, analytic and evaluative skills
- skills in the construction and expression of arguments
- the blending of precision and imagination, in addressing issues and in discourse
- information literacy.

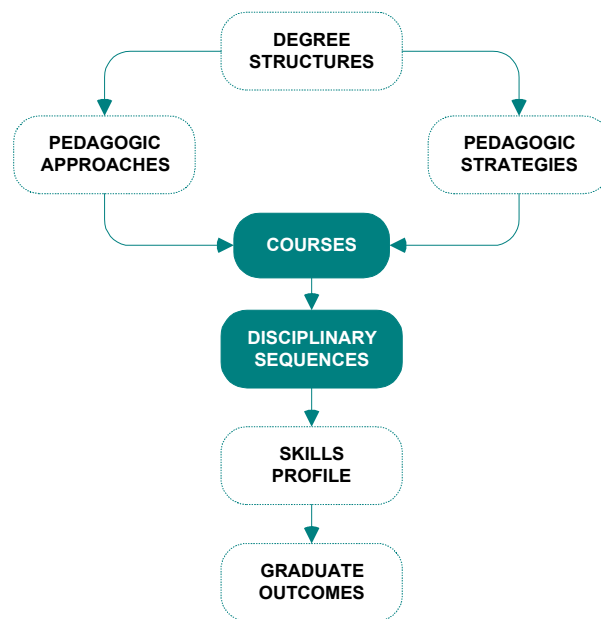
The development of the other skills profiled by the Faculty, however, has to be ‘carried’ by the way in which the component courses of disciplines are taught and given broader social or professional orientations.

Degree *structures* and *pedagogic approaches* together permit Graduate Outcomes to be attained through teaching in disciplines.

The following diagram is illustrative:



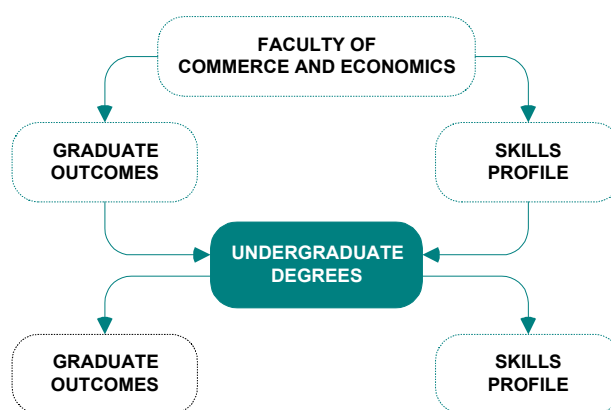
Within disciplinary sequences, each component course plays its part in skill development and the progressive attainment of Graduate Outcomes, governed by the *pedagogic strategies* used to facilitate and structure learning. The following diagram is illustrative:



Consistent with the Faculty’s Principles and Policies on Learning and Communication, ‘courses’ are the engine room of learning.

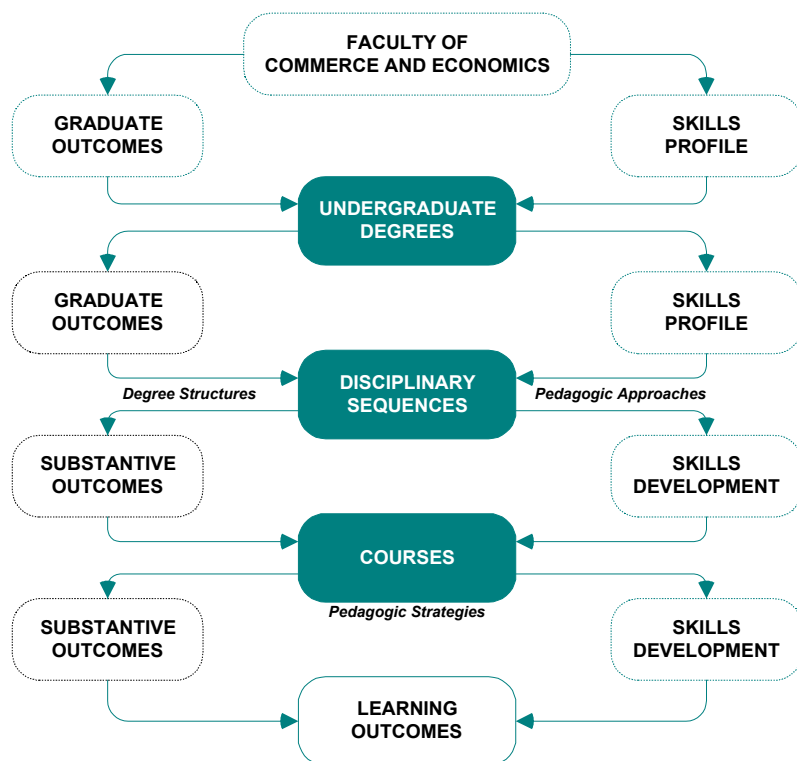
4.8 LEARNING OUTCOMES TO BE ATTAINED

The Faculty of Commerce and Economics has expressed the Graduate Outcomes and Skills Profiles that apply to its graduates irrespective of the Programs they take. These have been re-expressed above in a way that is appropriate to its undergraduate degrees; the following diagram is illustrative:



Similarly, the *substantive* outcomes and skills development associated with each discipline can be expressed, after due consideration of the structures and pedagogic approaches associated with the degrees to which they contribute.

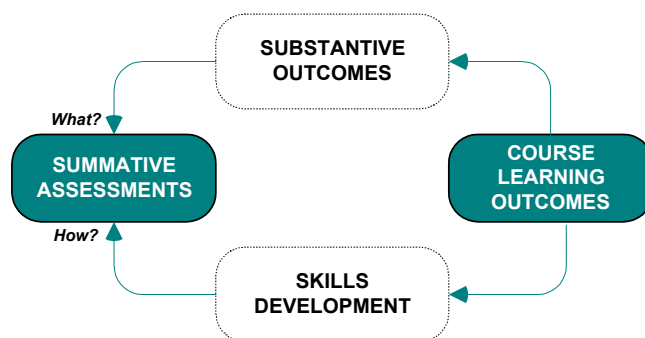
After due consideration of the pedagogic strategies associated with the degree, the *substantive* outcomes and skills development associated with each course in a discipline can be expressed. Together, the substantive outcomes and skills to be developed constitute the learning outcomes of courses; the following diagram is illustrative:



It is expected that these learning outcomes will express realistic and progressive challenges to the students involved.

4.9 LEARNING PROCESSES

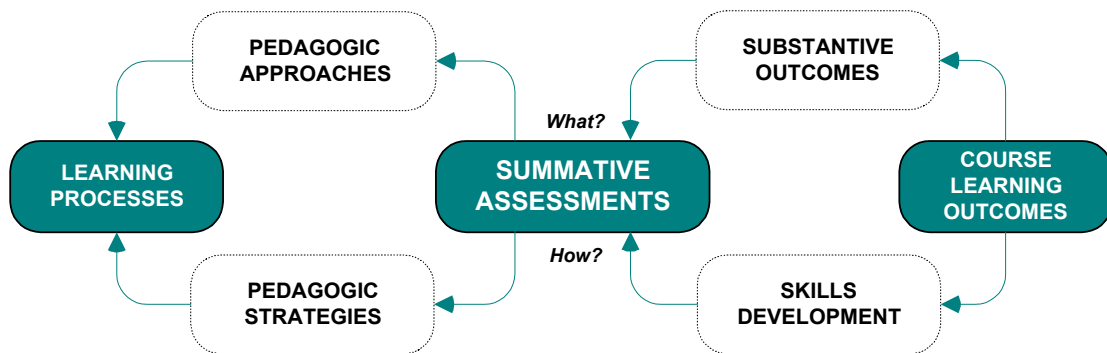
Following educational ‘best practice’, the learning outcomes to be secured through a course can be translated into the summative assessments that will be used to ascertain whether they have been achieved; the following diagram is illustrative:



The *Faculty’s Guidelines on Assessment and Learning* should be observed in structuring and expressing such assessments.

Given specification of *what* is to be assessed and *how*, it is possible to define the *learning processes* that need to be used to enable students to succeed in such assessments – with due regard to the *pedagogic*

approaches and *strategies* associated with the degree program and disciplinary sequence where the course is located; the following diagram is illustrative:



Learning processes encompass –

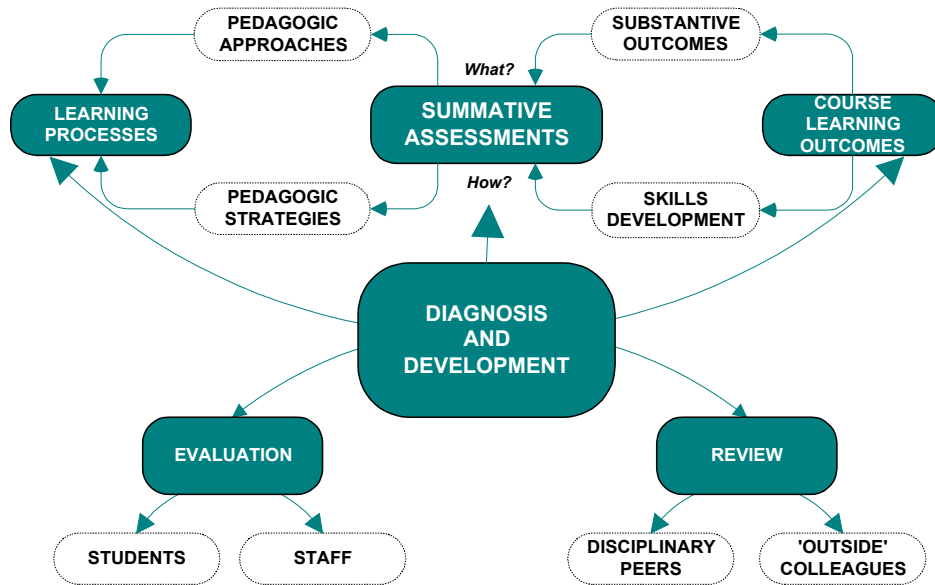
- what students are *to do*
- the learning *resources* that are available
- the *interactions* that are to occur
- how *feedback* is to be provided
- the *forms of support* for learning that are available.

The way in which relationships between Learning Outcomes, Summative Assessments and Learning Processes have been designed will be described in Course Outlines (see *Faculty Guidelines on Course Outlines*). *Faculty Guidelines on Interactive Teaching and Learning* and *Guidelines on Cross-Cultural Teaching and Learning* are relevant to the design of learning processes.

4.10 EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The issues of whether Course Learning Outcomes are attained, and whether Learning Processes are efficacious can be addressed initially by looking at Summative Assessment outcomes. If students succeeded in Summative Assessments that appropriately reflect the Course Learning Outcomes, then *prima facie* the course has been effective – more or less.

Further evidence about the efficiency and effectiveness of a Course can be gathered by various forms of Evaluation, drawing on inputs from students and staff involved in the Course or from reviews by peers or colleagues inside or outside the discipline. Such Evaluations or reviews are to be diagnostic or developmental in orientation; the following diagram is illustrative:



These Course Evaluations or Reviews will focus on:

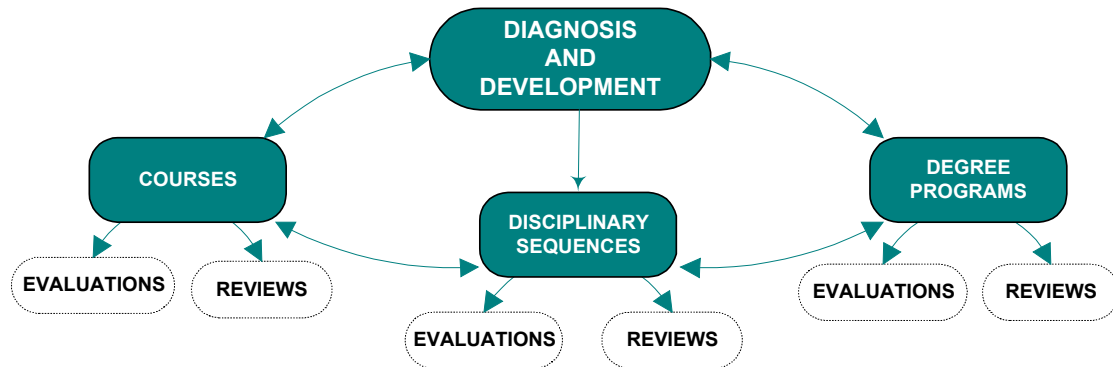
- the *appropriateness* of the Course Learning Outcomes in the context of the discipline and the undergraduate Program in which it is located;
- the *effectiveness* of the Course in terms of attainment of Learning Outcomes, as evidenced by Summative Assessments and Evaluations and Reviews;
- *how well* Summative Assessments and Learning Processes assisted in focusing and guiding learning.

At present the following types of Evaluation or review are undertaken in relation to Courses:

- Evaluation by Students
 - Course Evaluation Questionnaires
 - Teacher Evaluation Questionnaires
(see *Faculty Policy on Evaluation by Students*)
- Evaluation by Staff (teaching the Course)
 - Formalised Reviews by Teaching Teams
 - Informal Reviews
- Reviews
 - by staff or seniors in a School, formalised or informal
 - by arrangement with staff of the Educational Development Unit or others.

These Evaluations and reviews feed into formalised or informal Course and staff developmental processes within Schools.

Course related Evaluations and Reviews are supported/supplemented by Evaluations and Reviews that focus on disciplinary sequences or overall degree Programs; the following diagram is illustrative:



At the disciplinary level, Evaluations and Reviews may derive input from students, staff of the School, or outsiders (such as, Disciplinary Reviews or Reviews by professional associations or accrediting bodies). In addition, Evaluations or Reviews that are focused at the Degree Program level may provide information about Disciplinary sequences as a by-product (such as, CEQ Evaluations).

At present the following types of Evaluation or Review are undertaken in relation to Disciplinary Sequences:

- Peer Reviews
 - by colleagues in particular disciplines across Australia (eg; in Accounting, Economics)
- Accreditation Reviews
 - by professional associations (eg; Accounting, Actuarial Studies)
- Exit Surveys
 - in terms of disaggregated CEQ Survey data.

The outcomes of these Reviews/Evaluations are entered into formal or informal developmental dialogues within Schools.

At the Degree Program level, student input is gained from surveys conducted through the Faculty, by UNSW, and the CEQ. The survey data are entered into Quality or Program Reviews conducted at the Faculty level. In addition, occasional staff-led Reviews of part or all of the Faculty's undergraduate degrees are undertaken.

At present the following types of Evaluation or Review are undertaken in relation to undergraduate Degree Programs:

- Evaluation by Students
 - Proposed Faculty 'replication' of CEQ
 - UNSW Surveys
 - CEQ exit surveys
- Reviews
 - Formal reviews of undergraduate Program Quality by Faculty

- Occasional ‘reviews’ within Faculty of aspects of undergraduate Programs (eg; First Year Studies).

The outcomes of these Evaluations/Reviews are considered by formal Committees of the Faculty.

4.11 ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Academic staff are appointed on the basis of their demonstrated capability or potential as educators. From this point, they are brought under the guidance of a Head of School, to plan their development and review their progress. Depending on background and perceived needs, the Head of School may arrange the following:

- On-the-job mentoring/coaching by more experienced staff of the School or others (eg; the EDU);
- Participation in short ‘formal courses’ dealing with Learning in Higher Education, or with particular facets of learning in these settings (eg; with presentations, assessment, promoting interaction in learning, promoting learning in cross-cultural settings, using technology effectively in supporting learning), or with an introduction to tutoring;
- Participation in UNSW or Faculty-run Induction Programs for new staff;
- Reviews and guidance related to Course Evaluations or Teacher Evaluations;
- Resourcing support for managing ‘difficult’ learning situations or pursuing innovation.

The Faculty provides developmental support to staff and Schools through the Education Development Unit. The Education Development Unit provides:

- Introduction to Tutoring Programs for new tutorial staff;
- Induction programs for new academic staff;
- Coaching, mentoring or targeted developmental support;
- The provision of short courses in selected areas, and relevant resource materials;
- Support for collaborative developmental projects within a Course (eg; promoting interactive learning) or School (eg; using educational technology), or across the Faculty (eg; support for First Year);
- ‘back-up’ for unexpected difficulties, including the provision of resources where necessary;
- mechanisms for surfacing and sharing ‘innovations’;
- a point for inquiry about ‘best practice’ in teaching and learning.

4.12 STUDENT PREPARATION AND SUPPORT

It is seen as important that students are oriented to the styles of learning and challenges they will face in the Faculty's undergraduate Programs. For this reason, the Faculty provides, with the support of its Education Development Unit,

- a comprehensive orientation Program, involving teaching staff of the Faculty;
- a 'buddy support' Program through the Commerce and Economics Society;
- ongoing group workshops related to various learning issues;
- Peer Assistance Support Groups in all 'common core' courses in first year, using trained senior students supported by academic staff;
- A credit-bearing course focused on competence in Business Communication;
- 'in-course' support, in collaboration with teaching staff;
- self-managed Programs directed at enhancing Information Literacy and Computer Literacy;
- individualised learning support where necessary, or referral to specialised support services;
- guidance for students 'at risk' through the Faculty Academic Advisor.

4.13 CONTEXTUALISING SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

The support for learning provided through Schools or the Faculty's Educational Development Unit is centred on *courses*, where staff and students are engaged in the process of learning. The aim is to make learning in these contexts less stressful and more effective. For this reason, staff of the Educational Development Unit focus their energies on assisting academic staff to make their courses more successful, with the by-product of such assistance being more beneficial learning-on-the-job by academic staff. The students benefit from such in-course support, in the contexts where they are engaged with learning.

Where it is seen as beneficial, learning support is organised at a *programmatic* level. Thus, induction and developmental programs are run for new academic staff and tutors, and orientation programs are run for entering students.

Where necessary, learning support is contextualised at the *individual* level, for staff or students. Whether learning support is provided in courses, at a programmatic level, or for individuals – it is adapted to the needs, developmental expectations, modes of progression, and challenges of those involved.

4.14 STUDENT DIVERSITY

While undergraduate students in the Faculty come from *diverse* backgrounds, the challenge for the Faculty is for them *all* to achieve the Graduate Outcomes and related Skills established for undergraduate degree Programs.

This can only be accomplished by a focus on relevant Learning Outcomes, in whatever disciplines or courses that a student takes.

It also requires (a) a way of defining what is to be accomplished as a student and then as a graduate of the Faculty, and (b) structured support in accommodating difficulties and challenges posed by diversity on the path to a common level of Graduate Outcome. How these twin requirements are addressed is outlined in this *Learning and Communication Skills Support Plan*.

Student diversity is a learning resource that can be capitalised on by academic staff in the courses they teach, through appropriately designed learning processes that promote teamwork, interactive learning and cross-cultural understanding. See the *Faculty Policy on Internationalisation of Teaching and Learning*.