The Review of the Faculty of Information Technology - A Submission to the Decanal Team

1. Introduction

The questions posed in the Faculty Review Scope document are:

- Does the existing structure and responsibilities of the Associate Deans best allow us to enact our values and to achieve our vision, objectives, and KPIs?
- Does the Faculty need a Deputy Dean? If so, what are the responsibilities of the Deputy Dean?
- What qualities do decanal incumbents need to enable us to enact our values and achieve our vision, objectives, and KPIs?

Obviously for a Faculty to prosper, it must have high quality management at the Faculty level as well as in the Schools. Although the Faculty is large, the leadership of the IT Faculty (e.g. Heads of Schools, Associate Heads and the Associate Deans) has fallen on the shoulders of a small number of staff some of whom have carried the burden for a number of years because the Faculty lacks a sufficient number of senior staff that are capable and willing to take on management tasks.

2. Associate Deans

Current Status

The Faculty has 6 Associate Deans and a Research Mentor. The portfolios of the Associate Deans are as follows:

- Development
- Graduate Studies
- International
- Research
- Research Training
- Teaching

The current arrangement results in 7 senior academic staff of the Faculty devoting much of their time to administrative work. This is in addition to the eight Heads of School, seven Associate Heads, and the Dean.

The Faculty Office provides support to the Associate Deans and Research Mentor although it appears that several of them are not satisfied with the support provided.

Some of the current Associate Dean roles fit in with Associate Dean roles in other faculties such as Teaching, Research and International/External but others do not. There are also areas that are not covered by the Associate Deans such as technology and resources. The technology issue is important to the Faculty but little planning is done currently.

There are no position descriptions for the Associate Deans and they have no clearly defined performance indicators.
The Associate Deans are all involved in day to day administrative work, they have little influence on policy development and implementation as the Schools control the funds and there are no clearly defined mechanisms for them providing input to the Schools.

There are Faculty committees such as the Faculty Education Committee (FEC), the Faculty Research Committee (FRC), Faculty Board and Dean’s Advisory Team in which the Associate Deans have input. The FEC and FRC are chaired by AD(T) and AD(R) respectively.

**Current Roles and Achievements**

Associate Dean (Development) sets strategy and direction to ensure effective engagement between the Faculty and industry, government and community organisations. During 2003, the AD(D) participated in Monash’s bid to establish the ICT Centre of Excellence, established the Global IT Internships Scheme, developed publicity for School Industrial Experience projects and established and directed the FIT "CoolCampus" initiative.

Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) represents the Faculty on the University Education Committee, is the Deputy Chair of the FEC and chaired the University Coursework Scholarships committee. During 2003, the AD(GS) was given responsibility for the direction of the Masters Transition Program.

Associate Dean (International) monitors and provides advice on international matters of significance to the Faculty, including offshore pathways, partnerships and campuses. He/she also provides leadership and direction to offshore developments and to Monash College. AD(I) is a member of a number of university and Faculty committees including chairing the Faculty’s International Roundtable (FIR). In 2003, the AD(I) formulated and negotiated an agreement with Monash College and negotiated OCL agreements with TMC, SPACE and Beijing University of Technology.

Associate Dean (Research) leads the Faculty’s research planning that builds on the Faculty’s research strengths and works to optimise research outcomes. He is the Chair of the FRC and an ex-officio member of CADRES. During 2003, the AD(R) sustained activity in the areas of: ARC grant schemes, profiling and communicating the Faculty’s research and building research culture and capability

Associate Dean (Research Training) is responsible for HDR admissions and HDR scholarships and is responsible (with MGS) for all issues regarding HDR students’ research supervision and thesis examination.

Associate Dean (Teaching) implements the University Education Policy, overseeing Faculty policy on course development, delivery, assessment and review and is Chair of the FEC. He also assists staff development in teaching, provides student advice, counselling and pastoral care and oversees or manages student grievances, student discipline procedures and credit transfer arrangements. During 2003, the AD(T) developed an on-line review process for teaching units.

The Research Mentor assists the AD(R) to develop research in the Faculty and foster existing and creation of new research groups. He assisted in the development of research themes in the Faculty and encourages new researchers. He encourages and helps develop applications for research grants and facilitates workshops and seminars on research and technical aspects of grant applications.
Interaction with the Faculty Office

With the exception of the Research section there is no direct one-to-one relationship between the Faculty Office Directors and the Associate Deans. For example, the student services section has many roles with their main role being to provide services to students. Business Operations does not deal directly with the Associate Deans but has connections through the other Directors. Technical Services does not have a one-to-one relationship as there is no Associate Dean for Technology or Resources. ARM deals with most of the Associate Deans as it has a broad portfolio.

The communication between some of the Associate Deans and the Faculty Office can be improved. The Associate Deans need to establish who the right Faculty Office staff to talk to are. Each Associate Dean should have one Director to whom they are primarily related. This would make it easier to deal with people at the operational level as the Directors sit between the strategic and operational levels.

The roles of the Associate Deans cannot become full-time otherwise the incumbents are no longer academics, they become administrators. The Faculty Office needs to provide enough support to ensure no Associate Deans spends more than 60% of their time on their Associate Dean’s work.

There is not enough academic input into the Technical Services section. The issue of overseeing technical resources needs to be resolved.

The issue of how Associate Deans are appointed needs to be reviewed. In the past expressions of interest have been sought but it is desirable that every Associate Dean position be advertised in the Faculty with a small selection committee. This process will be greatly helped by the development of position descriptions.

3 Deputy Dean

The Faculty of IT is rather complex with eight schools located on seven campuses including two overseas. Managing such a complex faculty is a demanding task. For the Dean to be effective, he/she requires good support in terms of a capable Faculty Manager, capable Directors in the Faculty Office, good Head of Schools and a small team of capable Associate Deans. Managing a large number of staff that report to the Dean itself creates substantial workload. To reduce the Dean’s workload significantly would require reducing the number of staff reporting to him by reducing the number of Associate Deans, reducing the number of Schools and perhaps appointing a Deputy Dean.

There are thus several issues:

1. Can the number of people directly reporting to the Dean be reduced significantly by reducing the number of schools and the number of Associate Deans? Also should the Faculty Research Professors continue to report to the Dean?

2. Should some areas in the Faculty Office continue to report to the Faculty Manager? For example, is it appropriate for ARM and Technical Services to report to the Faculty Manager who is unlikely to have expertise in either of these areas? Would it be better to have them reporting to the Deputy Dean or to the Chairs of relevant committees?
3. Is it desirable to reduce the number of Associate Deans to only two; AD(T) and AD(R)? Could the remaining responsibilities be handled by a Deputy Dean or the Faculty Office?

4. Is it desirable to provide significant funds to the Associate Deans, for example the Faculty research funds to the AD(R)?

5. Is it desirable for the Dean to have a Deputy that he works closely with and who can represent him when required?

6. How can the communication within the Faculty be improved so that the staff feel part of the team?

The current arrangement in the Faculty has many senior staff reporting to the Dean. This is not effective since the Dean is unable to provide sufficient time to supervise each of these senior staff members. Also, having so many Heads of Schools and so many Associate Deans itself is not effective since it takes out so many senior academics away from their academic work. The number of HOS and ADs should therefore be reduced.

The number of Associate Deans should perhaps be reduced to the two most important roles: Teaching and Learning, and Research and Research Training. If the Faculty Office can provide adequate support to these two positions relieving them of much of their administrative tasks then they can be very effective in focussing on the strategic issues that they need to. The Research Mentoring task should be given to the Research Professors who should be acting as research mentors within the Faculty.

Some people have suggested that the Faculty research funds that currently are part of the Dean’s budget be given to the AD(R) who then becomes responsible for allocation of such funds. Although this appears like a good idea, its implications should be carefully considered since making the Associate Deans line managers is likely to lead to conflicts with the Head of Schools. To be effective the ADs need to work cooperatively with the Schools. Allocation of substantial funds to the ADs is likely to damage the cooperative spirit between the Schools and the ADs.

There are other staff that report to the Dean. There are three (or four) Faculty Research Professors that report to him. There is the Director of the FLITE Centre reporting to him. Perhaps there are others but it makes little sense to have the Research Professors who are located within the Schools supervising HDR students that are enrolled in the Schools to be reporting to the Dean. It will be much more effective for them to be reporting to the relevant Head (or two Heads) and continue to play a Faculty-wide research role. Also, the Director of the FLITE Centre should not be reporting to the Dean. The Centre should be closed but if it is not then it is appropriate that the Director report to the Associate Dean (Teaching).

Even if the number of senior academic staff reporting to the Dean is significantly reduced, it is desirable for the Dean to have a Deputy who can work with him/her closely, be responsible for a variety of tasks (e.g. tasks related to development and international) and represent him/her when required. This role perhaps should not be full-time since it is desirable for the Deputy Dean to be spending at least one day a week in one of the Schools. Normally, the Deputy Dean should come from an area of IT that complements the area of expertise of the Dean. In the present situation it will make perfect sense for the Deputy Dean to have a more technical background than the current Dean does. My personal preference is for a person from outside Monash to be appointed.
to this role since the Faculty needs more senior people with new ideas who can rise above the current Faculty politics just as the current Dean has.

The Faculty requires much better communication between the Decanal team and the staff within the Schools. To some extent this communication can be improved by improving the Web sites within the Faculty and using them frequently (almost on a daily basis) to communicate with the staff. In addition it is essential that the Dean/Deputy Dean/Associate Deans/Faculty Manager be meeting with staff formally and informally regularly. Perhaps a monthly staff meeting could be held in each School attended by all the people listed above. If the number of Schools is small, the meetings may not be such a burden on the Decanal team.

Another issue that needs to be considered is the operation of the Faculty Committees. FEC, FRC, Technical Committee, IRT, DAT etc.

4. Recommendations

1. The number of Associate Deans should be reduced two. These should be in the areas of Teaching and Learning, and Research and Research Training. The Associate Deans should not be full-time. Perhaps a 60% appointment is appropriate for both.

2. A Deputy Dean should be appointed. He/she should be responsible for international and industry relations as well as for Technical Services and ARM sections of the Faculty Office. The appointee should spend at least one day a week in one of the Schools. An external appointment in a technical area is desirable.

3. Each Associate Dean should be required to have a rolling three-year strategic plan that is revised annually. This plan should be presented to the Faculty Board each year and implemented in cooperation with the Faculty Office.

4. Each of the two Associate Deans should meet with the relevant Director or the Faculty Registrar regularly, perhaps weekly. Each Associate Dean should spend at least one day a week in the Faculty Office at Caulfield.

5. The work of the Research Mentor should be shared amongst the Faculty’s Research Professors.

6. Associate Deans should be appointed for a fixed term of three years with a one-year probationary period. Normally no reappointment should be possible after a three-year term.

7. Each Associate Dean completing a three-year term should be encouraged and supported to go on an OSP on completion of his/her term.

8. The Associate Deans and the Deputy Dean should focus on strategic issues and delegate most of the administrative work to the Faculty Office.

9. The Associate Deans should not be allocated significant Faculty funds e.g. Faculty research funds to the AD(R). Any such allocation is likely to create tension between the Heads of Schools and the ADs which is not desirable.
10. A good web site should be built to improve communication between the Decanal team and the Faculty staff. Monthly visits from the Decanal team to each School are desirable if the number of Schools is reduced.

11. Consideration should be given to improving the operations of the Faculty committees FEC, FRC, Technical Committee, IRT, DAT and the Faculty Board.

12. The workload of the Associate Deans may be reduced by ensuring that they focus on strategic issues rather than operational issues. It may therefore be desirable that the FEC and FRC not be chaired by AD(T) and AD(R) respectively but they be ex-officio members of the respective committees. Consideration should be given to further reducing the committee work of the Associate Deans by getting other senior academics involved in a variety of committees e.g. Board of Examiners and the Disciplinary Committee.

Gopal Gupta  
School of Computer Science and Software Engineering  
11 August 2004