

CHAPTER 9

The Administrative Arrangements: Part 1

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Introduction

During the years 1989 to 1991, the academic administrators were faced with a specific task - the introduction, into their respective schools, of masters' degree courses. The aim of this and the subsequent chapter is to describe the administrative arrangements used for decision-making concerning this task. In essence then these chapters provide a portrait of the academic administrators in decision-making mode.

The term 'administrative arrangements' was defined in Chapter One (on pp.14-15). There the term was taken to refer to: the administrative units involved; the functions of each administrative unit; and the relationships between the administrative units. This chapter contains: (a) a summary of the principal administrative units identified in the three course development processes and (b) a discussion of the functions of *one* of these units - the course development committee. The functions of the remaining units identified, and the relationships between the units, will be the subject of Chapter Ten.

The introduction of any new course is a complex process comprising a number of steps, some of which are carried out within the school that is responsible for proposing the course, whilst the remainder take place at an institution-wide level. It is therefore necessary to clearly identify those steps in the process relevant to the administrative behaviour being examined here. This is the purpose of the opening section of the present chapter. This section will also clarify for the reader the specific context of the administrators' behaviour.

In presenting the material on the administrative arrangements, the writer has been confronted with the task of providing a discussion which clearly compares the three cases. One possibility would have been to present an account of the main features of each case (according to the three major

aspects of administrative arrangements identified above), with this account being then followed by an examination of the similarities and differences between the cases. However, such an approach, it is submitted, would be cumbersome and repetitious, and would inevitably detract from a presentation of the similarities and differences. An approach of this kind has thus been rejected in favour of one which weaves together from the beginning, the major points of comparison and contrast between the three cases. In this way the writer has aimed at achieving a very pointed comparison, one that highlights as sharply as possible the major similarities and differences between the three cases. A summary of these similarities and differences will be presented in the concluding section of this chapter.

The writer is conscious that certain aspects of the administrative arrangements could be the subject of a very detailed investigation. Take, for example, the functions of the administrative units. The functions of each of the units identified has been examined with respect to six characteristics: composition, meeting activity, formality, decisions made, focal decision issues and methods of making decisions. The last of these - the methods utilised by a unit in making decisions - could undoubtedly constitute a study in its own right. The writer would contend, however, that this aspect of the administrative arrangements, along with others, has been examined in sufficient depth to accomplish the requirements of this particular research task.

One final point of clarification concerns the use of the terms 'specialisation' and 'subject major'. The Master of Education was proposed as a generic course comprising two core units and six possible areas of specialisation. The core units were compulsory for all students, irrespective of their chosen area of specialisation. In contrast the proposed Master of Information Technology was to comprise distinct subject majors: Information Systems, Applied Mathematics and Statistics and Information Science. The proposed Master of Arts was similar to the Master of Information Technology in that it was to comprise subject majors in Asian Studies and Communications. This difference in the nature of the courses accounts for the use of the term 'specialisation' when referring to aspects of the Master of Education and the term 'subject major' when referring to aspects of the Master of Information

Technology and the Master of Arts.

The Process of Introducing New Courses

From a curriculum perspective, the task of introducing a new course is one which incorporates a number of distinct phases: a development phase, an implementation phase and an evaluation phase. This point is made for the purpose of clarification. What the writer wishes to emphasise is that the behaviour of the academic administrators examined here occurs during the phase of course *development*, as distinct from the phases of course *implementation* or course *evaluation*.

The task of developing a new course is largely carried out within the particular academic school responsible for proposing the course. This task also forms part of a wider process which has as its goal the accreditation of the course by the appropriate authorities. This process of course accreditation involves not only the academic school proposing the course, but also a range of decision-making units which are external to the school. The Academic Board and the Council are, for example, two institution-wide decision-making units centrally involved in the process of course approval and accreditation. Moreover, in the period before the institution that is examined here became a University College, there was an external coordinating body which had the final authority to approve and accredit new courses. This body was the Board of Advanced Education.

As another example of a decision-making body involved in the process of course accreditation, the Course Assessment Committee can be cited. This committee, which is made up of visiting experts, functions as a source of advice and also as a monitoring device. It endeavours to ensure that new and revised courses will "operate at a level commensurate with" other similar course offerings. (D.D.I.A.E., School of Education, *Master of Education [Accreditation Submission]* October 1989, 42). There are other committees which may also be involved, as, for example, Course Advisory

Committees. These are likewise made up of visiting experts and are sometimes used in the early stages of course development.

Not every step, however, in the whole process of course accreditation is pertinent to the investigation undertaken here. In order to clarify for the reader those that are, Appendix E has been included. Appendix E includes a description of the stages involved in the process of course accreditation.

The stages which are pertinent to this study are 4 and 8. Stage 4 has as its goal the preparation of a developmental course submission, whilst the goal of stage 8 is the preparation of a detailed course submission. These particular stages are integral to the development phase and they take place within the particular school proposing the new course. It is during these stages that a school's academic administrators are concerned with instituting the administrative arrangements that will allow for effective course development and it is the behaviour of the academic administrators during these particular stages which is the focus of this examination. Excluded from consideration is the behaviour of the administrators during stages in the wider accreditation cycle, stages which involve decision-making units such as the Academic Board, the Council, and the Course Assessment Committee.

The Administrative Units

The administrative units identified in the three course development processes are summarised in the following table.

TABLE 6

Administrative Units Identified in
the Development of Three
Masters' Courses

Units	Arts	Information Technology	Education
Course Development Committee	•	•	•
Specialist Groups	—	• (1)	• (2)
Dean	•	•	—
Associate Dean (Academic)	—	•	—
School Board	•	•	•
School Course Planning & Review Committee	—	—	• (3)
Dean's Consultative Committee	—	—	• (3)
Heads of Programme	—	—	• (4)

- 1 Specialist Groups in Applied Mathematics and Statistics; Information Science; Information Systems
- 2 Specialist Groups in Curriculum; Educational Management; Special Education; Children's Literature; Human Movement; Distance Education Pedagogy; Research Methods; Current Issues in Education.
- 3 During the initial stage of the development of the Master of Education (July '88- Dec '88), there were two centralised units responsible for the decision-making – the Dean's Consultative Committee and the School Course Planning and Review Committee. These units were replaced by a School Board in January 1989.
- 4 A group comprising two Heads of Programme: the Acting Head of Programme (Bachelor of Education) and the Head of Programme (Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children).

As Table 6 indicates, the administrative units identified include a course development committee, specialist groups, and a centralised unit known as a School Board. In addition, the units identified include two Deans, one Associate Dean and two Heads of Programme.

The administrative unit described as a course development committee is an important decision-making unit common to all three cases. In the early stages of the development of the Master of Education, this group was referred to as the Master's Task Force. In the development of the Master of Arts and Master of Information Technology, it was referred to as "the course development committee." For the purposes of this discussion, the latter term, that is, course development committee, will be used when referring all three of these committees.

The specialist groups were administrative units comprising staff with expertise in a particular subject area or discipline. These groups functioned essentially as sub-committees of the course development committee. They were, however, identified as administrative units in only *two* out of the three development processes - those for the Master of Information Technology and Master of Education.

In the development of the Master of Information Technology, where they were specifically referred to as "discipline groups," they were particularly active and played an important decision-making role. Three such specialist groups were involved in the development of the Master of Information Technology. These included the Information Science, Applied Mathematics and Statistics, and Information Systems specialist groups. Each of these was concerned with the development of a subject major within the Master of Information Technology.

In the development of the Master of Education, eight specialist subject groups were identified. Six of these were involved in decision-making about areas of specialisation to be included within the proposed course. These areas of specialisation were the following: Curriculum, Educational Management, Distance Education Pedagogy, Human Movement, Special Education and Children's Literature. The remaining two specialist groups were concerned with the two core units that were proposed for the Master of Education.

In all three development processes, individual administrators, as distinct from groups, were also identified as administrative units. The following

comments concerning the Dean assume a well-known distinction between the formal or official organisation and the actual organisation. The Dean is, within each of the schools, the final locus of authority and is responsible for endorsing and transmitting to Academic Board a school's official course submission. In actual practice, however, it was found that the Dean's role in decision-making varied. Thus the Dean has been identified as an administrative unit in the development of the Master of Arts and Master of Information Technology, but *not* in the development of the Master of Education.

Similarly, the role of the Associate Dean (Academic) varied across the three cases. The Associate Dean (Academic) has been identified as an administrative unit in his own right in the development of only *one* of the courses - the Master of Information Technology. In the development of the remaining two courses, his decision-making role did not extend beyond his membership of the course development committee.

Two Heads of Programme were identified as an administrative unit in only one development process - the development of the Master of Education. These two Heads of Programme, one of whom was also the chairman of the course development committee, functioned as an informal unit.

The remaining administrative unit identified was the School Board, a unit which formed an integral part of each school's formal or official organisational structure. The School Board was a body advisory to the Dean, one of its principal responsibilities being to advise the Dean on "the preparation of reports and submissions to meet the accreditation...requirements of the Council" (UCSQ, School of Education, 1989, 13). Thus, within each of the development processes, the School Board was the central administrative unit responsible for recommending to the Dean whether or not a master's course submission should be accepted and endorsed.

The previous point requires some qualification with respect to the Master of Education. It has previously been noted that this course (the Master of Education) was developed across a period of eighteen months, namely, July

1988 to December 1989. In 1988 when development of the Master of Education commenced, there were *two* centralised administrative units involved in decision-making pertaining to the Master of Education. These were the School Course Planning and Review Committee and the Dean's Consultative Committee, the former being a standing sub-committee of the latter. In 1989, the School Board replaced the Dean's Consultative Committee, as the principal administrative unit advisory to the Dean, and it (that is, the School Board) subsumed the functions of the former Dean's Consultative Committee *and* the School Course Planning and Review Committee. In summary then there were actually three centralised administrative units responsible for decisions concerning the Master of Education course. In the latter part of 1988, there was the School Course Planning and Review Committee and the Dean's Consultative Committee, whilst in 1989 there was the School Board.

To assist the reader to understand the organisational structure that the previous comments imply, a diagram of the organisational structure of the School of Education, as it existed from the end of 1989 through 1990 and 1991, is included on the next page (p.288). Diagrams illustrating the organisational structure of the Schools of Arts and Information Technology during the years when the Master of Arts and Master of Information Technology were developed, have not been included. The structure of these two schools was similar to that shown for the School of Education.

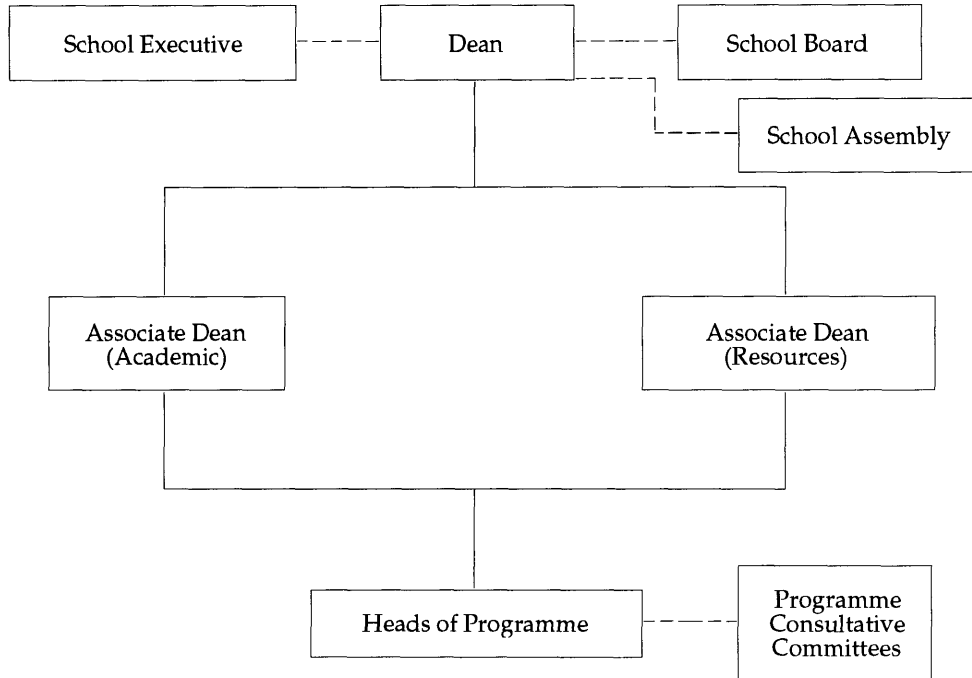


Figure 1

Organisational Structure of School of Education
1989 — 1990

The Functions of the Course Development Committees

In this section, the functions of the three course development committees are compared, with the similarities and differences in these functions being highlighted. The functions of the committees are discussed under the following headings: composition; meeting activity; formality; decisions made; focal decision issues; and methods of making decisions.

Composition

In the following table, the composition of the three course development committees is shown.

TABLE 7

Composition of Masters' Course
Development Committees
in Three Sub-Cultures

Arts	Information Technology	Education
Dean (1)	Dean (1)	Dean (1)
Associate Dean (Academic) (1)(2)	Associate Dean (Academic) (1)	Associate Dean (Academic) (1)
Associate Dean (Resources) and Head of Programme (Asian Studies Programme)	Associate Dean (Resources)	Associate Dean (Resources) and Head of Programme (Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration)
Head of Programme (Communications)	Head of Programme (Applied Mathematics and Statistics)	Head of Programme (Bachelor of Education) [and sometimes Acting Associate Dean (Academic)]
Lecturer (Asian Studies Programme) (3)	Head of Programme (Commercial Computing)	Acting Head of Programme (Bachelor of Education) (2)
Senior Lecturer (Research) (3)	Head of Programme (Graduate Studies) (2)	Head of Programme (Graduate Diploma in Teaching)
Lecturer (Cross-cultural Communication) (3)	Head of Programme (Information Science)	Head of Programme (Graduate Diploma in Education - Exceptional Children)
Representative (Library) (3)	Interested Staff Members (4)	
Representative (Distance Education Centre) (3)		

- 1 Ex-Officio member
- 2 Chairperson
- 3 Member by invitation
- 4 Interested staff members invited by Chair of Committee

As Table 7 indicates, all of the academic administrators who are the focus of this study were members of the course development committees. Deans and Associate Deans (Academic) were ex officio members.

It is noteworthy that the actual participation of the Dean varied across the

three cases. The Dean of Education was not present at any meetings of the course development committee. Where the development of the Master of Arts was concerned, the Dean attended only the first meeting of the committee. On the other hand, the Dean of Information Technology was present at all the meetings of the course development committee.

Table 7 also indicates that the composition of the course development committee varied across the three cases. In terms of size, the Arts and Education committees were similar, the former being made up of eight members and the latter, seven. Only one of the committees included no invited members, this being the Education committee. The Arts committee incorporated five invited members. These included three academic staff members: the Senior Lecturer (Research), a Lecturer from the area of Cross-Cultural Communications, and a lecturer from the Asian Studies programme. The remaining two invited members were representatives from the Library and the Distance Education Centre. Only in the case of Arts did the committee include representatives from departments or centres external to a school.

Of the three course development committees, the membership of the Information Technology committee was the least precisely defined. All academic staff who were interested in the development of the Master of Information Technology course were invited by the chairman to attend. Thus the size of this committee varied from meeting to meeting. Indeed, the term 'fluid participation' seems particularly apt in describing this committee's functioning.

The criteria for membership of the committees was based on a combination of factors which included some or all of the following: experience in the school as an academic administrator, higher degree qualifications, a reputation for research, and experience or expertise in a particular subject area or areas. Doctoral qualifications, a reputation for research and the holding of a senior administrative position were considered especially important in determining the membership of the Master of Education committee. As was noted above, it was the only one of the committees which included solely members who were senior academic administrators.

In the words of one:

What qualified you to be a member of the Committee was linked to your academic qualifications and having a senior academic administrative position within the School.

It was perhaps for this reason that the committee was perceived within the school as being an “elite group.” That it was so perceived was a comment made by several of the subjects.

Whilst the Master of Arts committee could be seen as being more ‘open’ in character than that used for the Master of Education, the most ‘open’ of all the committees was the Information Technology committee. Indeed the composition of the last provides a striking contrast with the more narrowly composed nature of the Education committee. The contrast between these two committees is all the more striking when it is recognised that both the proposed Master of Information Technology and the Master of Education were generic degrees, the former having three subject majors and the latter, six.

Across the three cases, there was some variation in the criteria used for the appointment to the role of chairman. The chairman of the committee for the development of the Master of Education was appointed principally on the basis of his reputation for research and his interest in the development of post-graduate studies. On the other hand, where the Arts and Information Technology committees were concerned, appointment seems to have been made, at least to some extent, on the basis of formal position. The Associate Dean (Academic) was chair of the Arts committee, and the Programme Head (Graduate Studies) was chair of the Information Technology committee.

Meeting Activity

The Education committee was characterised by a much higher level of meeting activity than were the remaining two committees. The Arts and Information Technology course development committees met only four and five times respectively, whereas the Education Committee held meetings at least every month, and sometimes fortnightly, over a period of

eighteen months. The relative paucity of the meetings held by the Arts committee is underscored by the fact that there were no meetings of specialist groups in this school.

That there were fewer meetings of the Arts committee may be due partly to the fact that the course finally developed was a specialised master's course - a Master of Arts (Asian Studies). However, it must also be said that the decision to develop a course in this particular area was not clear-cut from the beginning. The initial intention was to develop both a Master of Arts (Communications) and a Master of Arts (Asian Studies).

That a greater number of meetings were held by the Education committee, does not of itself mean that the development process was more effective, or perhaps even more thorough. It does, nevertheless, suggest that considerable importance was attached to the introduction of a master's course. This sense of the importance of the task is reflected in certain statements made by the Chairman, such as: "You see I thought that post-graduate studies are special..."

It is worth noting, in passing, that this sense of the importance of the task was especially evident when an inter-collegiate or systemic Master of Education was being developed. This course, which was proposed during the years 1986-1987 and which was to be offered on a collaborative basis by several colleges of advanced education, did not eventuate. However, a certain amount of the developmental work done during this period was utilised when the institution studied here commenced development of its own Master of Education. The writer, for example, in scanning the diaries of one of the subjects, noted that during the inter-collegiate or systemic phase, fifteen meetings were held across a period of six months. She noted, in particular, some Notices of Meeting which carried captions such as "Urgent Meeting." It is true that the sense of urgency that is reflected here became somewhat muted during the development of the institution's own Master of Education. Nevertheless, it is still correct to say that the behaviour of the Master of Education development committee appeared to reflect a conviction that a highly important task was at hand.

Formality

Of the three course development committees, the activities of the committee for the Master of Education were the most formalised. The meetings of this group were accompanied by extensive documentation. Notices of meeting and minutes of the proceedings of meetings were regularly produced. In addition to notices and minutes, there were extensive memoranda from the chairman. Often these provided information to the committee as, for example, his memorandum concerning "the clarification of specialisation teams." (*Chairman's Memorandum*, 28th September, 1989). Others, such as the *Master's Update*, no. 1 (11th August 1989) provided information to the staff generally.

The documentation which the committee utilised also included discussion papers such as *Formulating a Program Development Strategy...* prepared by the Acting Associate Dean (Academic) (School of Education, 1986). In addition, it included position statements by various members. It should be noted that at least some of this documentation was prepared during the period of the inter-collegiate or systemic Master of Education (1986-1987). Indeed, the chairman repeatedly emphasised that, in the development of the Master of Education, the group utilised and built upon the work carried out in the systemic phase.

In contrast to those of the Education committee, the meetings of the Arts and Information Technology committees were much less formalised and documentation was minimal. There were no agendas produced for meetings of the Master of Arts committee, whilst, in the case of the Master of Information Technology committee, only one meeting was accompanied by an agenda (*Circular*, Meeting no.3, undated).

Minutes were produced for two meetings of the Arts committee. (School of Arts, Course Development Committee, *Minutes* 1/90, 28th March 1990, and 2/90, 27th April 1990). Notes, as distinct from minutes, were issued for one meeting of the Information Technology committee (School of Information Technology, Course Development Committee, *Notes from Meeting*, 1.3.91). Leaving aside the draft versions of the submission documents themselves,

no other kind of documentation accompanied the meetings of the Arts and Information Technology committees.

It is noteworthy that the minutes of meetings of the Arts committee (*Minutes 1/90*, 28th March 1990, and *2/90*, 27th April 1990) provided much less information than did the minutes of the meetings of the Education committee. Perusal of the minutes of the Arts committee suggests that this group was preoccupied with an examination of the draft submission for the proposed Master of Arts. It is also noteworthy that one subject reiterated the point that, in his view, the committee was really "a bunch of proofreaders." Certainly the submission document itself appears to have been the focus of the committee's attention. Any perusal of the minutes lends weight to the view that, in the words of the same subject quoted previously, the Master of Arts committee was "extremely task-oriented rather than process oriented."

In sum, the documentation produced by the Master of Education committee was significantly greater than that produced by either of the other two committees. The documentation was more detailed as well as being more varied in its nature. The extent and range of the documentation that was utilised by the Education committee points to the thoroughness of this particular process of development.

Decisions

There were three main decision areas which the course development committees examined. These included the following: (a) curriculum; (b) staffing; and (c) resources other than staffing. Whilst staffing could be considered an aspect of the area of resources, it has been isolated here as a decision area in its own right. This is because staffing has a dimension which makes it different from other kinds of resources, such as computing hardware or financial resources. This dimension will be evident when the Education committee's treatment of staffing is discussed.

Within each of the three main areas indicated above, the committees made more detailed decisions. These detailed decision areas are shown in Table 8 commencing on the next page (p.295).

TABLE 8
Decision Areas Addressed by Course
Development Committees

Arts	Information Technology	Education
<p>Course Emphasis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision to postpone offering of Communications major. Emphasis to be Asian Studies 	<p>Course Emphasis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision to offer the following subject majors : Information Systems; Applied Mathematics and Statistics; Information Science • Decision to postpone offering of Information Science subject major 	<p>Structural Components :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core units • elective units • specialisation • research component <p>Areas of Specialisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Studies • Distance Education Pedagogy • Physical Education and Human Movement • Educational Management • Special Education and School Psychology • Children's Literature
<p>Relationship between Core Units, Elective Units and Research Component (Dissertation)</p>	<p>Preliminary Consideration of Relationship between Compulsory Course Work Units, Elective Units and Research Component</p> <p>Brainstorming of Themes and Issues to be represented in Information Systems Major</p> <p>Identification of Integrating Conceptual Framework</p>	<p>Relationship between Core Units, Units comprising Specialisation, Elective Units and Research Component (Project/ Dissertation)</p>
<p>Relationship between Theoretical Content and Practical Application of Theory</p> <p>Course Aims and Objectives</p>	<p>Course Aims and Objectives</p>	<p>Course Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Nature of Core Component</p> <p>Number of Core Units</p>
<p>Inclusion of Course Work on Subject of Research Methods</p> <p>Inclusion of Research Methods Unit in Core Component</p>	<p>Inclusion of Course Work on Subject of Research Methods</p> <p>Inclusion of Research Methods Unit in Information Systems major only</p>	<p>Inclusion of Course Work on Subject of Research Methods</p> <p>Nature of Research Methods Unit(s)</p> <p>Number of Research Methods Unit(s) (Initially a decision to include two such units. Later a decision to include only one).</p> <p>Inclusion of Research Methods unit(s) in Core Component.</p>
<p>Assessment of Course Work Units - Methods to be used</p> <p>Assessment of Dissertation - Methods to be used</p> <p>Principles and Procedures relating to Supervision of Dissertation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertation to focus on issues in the humanities and social sciences • Topic to be dependent on availability of supervisors • Relationship between supervisors and students • Monitoring of Progress of Students • Identification of Three Phases • Preparation of Dissertation • Dissertation Review • Dissertation Presentation • Stage of Course at which Dissertation should begin. 		<p>Assessment of Course Work Units - Methods to be used</p> <p>Assessment of Project/Dissertation - Methods to be used</p> <p>Procedures relating to Supervision of Project/Dissertation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanism for monitoring of Student progress • Procedures on completion of Project/Dissertation

TABLE 8 (continued)

Decision Areas Addressed by Course Development Committees

Arts	Information Technology	Education
<p>Entry Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admission Criteria <p>On-Campus Attendance Requirements for External Students</p> <p>Duration of Course</p> <p>Additional Staff Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision to request one new staff member (1 lecturer position) <p>Allocation of staff to proposed units</p> <p>Library Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of ordering of library resources to assess the adequacy of these for meeting the needs of a Master of Arts (Asian Studies) course. Decision to support the introduction of the Master of Arts (Asian Studies) through ordering of library resources to the amount of \$10,000 Identification of Additional Facilities and Equipment required. <p>Mode of Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time Internal Part-time External <p>Year of Commencement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time 1991 Internal Part-time 1991 External 1993 	<p>Additional Staff Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision to request three new staff members (2 lecturer positions, 1 Associate Professor position). One lecturer position and Associate Professor position budgeted for 1991. One lecturer position budgeted for 1992. <p>Hardware Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Information Technology Master's Resource Laboratory <p>Software Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determination of Software requirements for use by Students <p>Mode of Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time Internal Part-time External <p>Year of Commencement</p> <p>Information Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time 1992 Internal Part-time 1992 External 1993 <p>Applied Mathematics/Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time 1992 Internal Part-time 1992 	<p>Entry Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admission Criteria Criteria for Entry to Specialisations <p>Policy on Credits and Exemptions</p> <p>Articulation with Graduate Diplomas</p> <p>Inclusion of Concept of Negotiated Programme</p> <p>On-Campus Attendance Requirements for External Students</p> <p>Duration of Course</p> <p>Determination of Criteria for staffing of Master's course.</p> <p>Preliminary Allocation of Staff to proposed specialisations</p> <p>Mode of Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time Internal Part-time External <p>Year of Commencement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Full-time 1990 Internal Part-time 1990 External 1990

Table 8 (on pp.295-96) indicates a broad similarity in the detailed decision areas addressed by each committee. It is important to note, however, that the committees varied in the emphasis they placed on particular areas and in the way in which they addressed certain areas. The following discussion will illustrate some of the differences in the committees' approaches to decision-making within the three main decision areas.

Decisions (Curriculum)

Within the area of curriculum, the three committees focused largely on the structure of the proposed courses. This required decisions about the relationship that should exist between (a) core units (b) areas of specialisation, and (c) a research component (that part of the course involving a dissertation or project). Decisions were also made about the number and the nature of the core units to be included in a course, whether or not a unit should be included on the subject of research methods, and if so, the specific emphasis of such a unit. In addition, decisions were made about the criteria that would govern entry to each course and about the criteria for entry to specialisations.

From the beginning of its deliberations, the Arts committee was preoccupied with making very specific decisions about the structure of the course and especially with details relating to the dissertation. They considered, for example, the precise stage at which the dissertation should begin and emphasised the need for a structured pattern of supervision. The committee specified the details of this pattern of supervision and outlined the nature of the relationship that should exist between supervisor and student. They decided also that course work should be included that would assist students with what was termed "the dissertation methodology."

What was distinctive about the Arts committee was their preoccupation with the mechanics of course design and implementation. As a consequence, their behaviour appeared to be imbued with an instrumental quality. Their concern with determining the requirements for on-campus attendance by external students, and with such issues as the preparation of external course material, reinforced this sense of the instrumental character

of the group's deliberations.

In contrast, the Education Committee, for most of its sessions, focused on central rather than peripheral curriculum issues. This group analysed, for example, issues such as the relationship between the major components of the course, the criteria for entry to the course, the nature of the core units, and the size and length of the course. The area of criteria for entry to specialisations was considered especially important by the Master of Education committee. Discussions during meetings circled backwards and forwards across these subjects without any particular direction or sequence. The overall impression was one of extensive discussion of a range of curriculum topics, this discussion existing at a fairly generalised level. One subject commenting later on the nature of the committee's deliberations noted that "it all just kept going round and round."

The deliberations of the Arts committee appeared always to have in view the eventual implementation of the course. Its decision-making was more specific and detailed, focusing on the more practical aspects of course design, its mechanics, as it were. On the other hand, the deliberations of the Education committee existed at a higher level of generality, were more theoretical and reflective in nature. The Education committee, in its initial and middle phases, functioned much more as a curriculum development committee per se than did its Arts counter-part. Only in the very final stages did the Education committee become involved with articulating the details of course procedures, or with matters such as those relating to the preparation of the external course material.

The Information Technology committee was closer to Education than to Arts in its behaviour. It too addressed the overall structure of the course, but this issue was canvassed at an even more generalised level than was the case with the proposed Master of Education. "Open-ended" and "free-wheeling" were terms used to describe the discussions of the Information Technology committee. The meetings of this group were distinctive in being quintessentially brainstorming sessions and they were clearly recognised as such. "The committee", said the Chairman, "looked broadly across the School and asked what subject areas could be sensibly offered."

Again, in his own words, it engaged in “brainstorming themes and ideas.” It was particularly concerned with attempting “to brainstorm the themes and issues to be reflected in the Information Systems major.”

One noteworthy feature was the emphasis placed by the Dean of Information Technology on the need for a philosophical and conceptual framework that would integrate the diverse subject majors, namely, Information Science, Applied Mathematics and Statistics, and Information Systems. In the accreditation submission (School of Information Technology, 1991, 2) it is stated that the Master of Information Technology course is “designed to take advantage of the areas of commonality between the disciplines in the School.” The decision to design the course so as to highlight areas of commonality undoubtedly reflected the Dean’s advocacy of an integrated course.

This emphasis on the need for an integrating philosophical and conceptual framework was unique to the Information Technology committee and was typical of the somewhat abstract nature of the group’s concerns. At no stage were the committee’s deliberations influenced by specific objectives. Indeed, the brainstorming nature of the meetings provoked, in some members, a degree of frustration as evidenced in the following comment:

Never did that committee engage in planning with specific targets in mind.

In sum, the “open-ended,” “free-wheeling,” “brainstorming” behaviour of the Information Technology committee provides a striking contrast to the specifically focused, detailed, task-oriented behaviour of the Arts committee.

Decisions (Staffing)

Decisions about staffing were made by all three committees. The Arts committee resolved, for example, that one additional staff member would be required to meet the demands of the proposed new course. However, the staffing area was given most prominence by the Information Technology and Education committees. There was a sharp contrast, nonetheless, between these two committees’ perspectives on staffing. The decisions made

by the Information Technology committee were heavily influenced by the question of whether or not funds would be available for proposed additional teaching positions. This question was addressed at length at the third meeting (March 15th, 1991) of the Information Technology committee. Not surprisingly, given this financial perspective, the Associate Dean (Resources) played a key role at this meeting. He monitored the viability of the various ideas proposed and provided information on the available funding. In his own words he attempted to "bring them [the committee] down to earth." His comments on certain proposals included statements such as the following:

But I can tell you that it is no good talking about an Associate Professor because you will not be able to get one.

Of the three committees, it was this one which was most acutely aware that its decisions about staffing, and for that matter the curriculum also, were ultimately constrained by the availability of financial resources.

The Education committee's perspective was quite different from that of the Information Technology committee. Here the committee's approach to decision-making had a much more qualitative dimension, its concern being with the qualifications and expertise needed to teach at a master's level. Hence the decisions of the Education committee in this area were essentially about the criteria governing the eligibility to teach within the proposed master's course. Decisions about these criteria were inextricably intertwined with decisions about the structure of the course. For example, the committee saw as one of its major decisions the determination of the areas of specialisation to be included in the course, but this in turn was seen to hinge upon the qualifications and expertise of the staff available to offer these areas.

Decisions (Resources other than Staffing)

By resources other than staffing are meant library resources, computing resources and financial resources. Again, this area was addressed by all of the committees, but with different degrees of emphasis.

By comparison with both the Arts and Information Technology committees, the Education committee addressed this area in a very limited way. It gave some attention to the question of whether or not adequate library resources existed, but it could not be said that any significant decisions were made pertaining to library resources. Similarly, there was very little discussion of the financial implications of the proposed master's course.

It has already been pointed out (on p.290) that the Arts committee was the only one of the three course development committees to include representatives from the central library. The Arts committee addressed the area of library resources in greater depth than did either of the remaining committees. It focused principally on the adequacy of existing library resources and resolved to liaise with the central library on the development of resources in the field of Asian Studies. It also resolved to allocate more of its annual library funds for the acquisition of resources in this particular field.

Of the three committees, the area of resources was assigned most importance by the Information Technology committee. At its third meeting (15th March 1991), the committee addressed, along with staffing resources, the resources required in the form of computing hardware and software.

No decisions were made about the actual allocation of funding for resources. Indeed such decisions were not the province of this committee. Of the three committees, it was the Information Technology committee that seemed most aware of the constraints imposed by funding. It was this committee which attempted to gauge, however broadly, the financial implications of the proposed new course.

Focal Decision Issues

The prevalence of certain issues and the intensity with which they were discussed justifies their being seen as important or focal decision issues. Whilst not all of these issues were accompanied by conflict, most were at least contested to some degree. The discussion included in the

previous section has already drawn attention to some of these issues, since they were the context out of which specific decisions were distilled. This section expands on the focal decision issues.

The deliberations of the three course development committees varied from being close to 'issue-less' in Arts to being 'issue-laden' in Education. Those of the Information Technology committee could be located somewhere between these extremes. In what follows, the focal decision issues of the Arts committee will be considered firstly, then those of the Education committee and finally those of the Information Technology committee.

The Arts Committee If an issue is seen as a topic which provokes debate then there was only one which was prominent during the Arts committee meetings. This issue was, in the words of one, "the weighting to be given to theoretical studies as opposed to the practical application of theory." It emerged as an issue because there was one subject (the Head of the Communications Programme) who disputed what he saw to be the "a-theoretical," non-academic nature of the course being developed. This subject spoke of the proposed course as being

a good course for travel agents, but not a good academic course

His concern about the academic nature of the course was also reflected in his comment that the proposed course was

like a travel brochure, but not a proper master's level unit which should introduce students to some theoretical frameworks for what they are studying.

And again, he noted that "only lip-service was given to academic considerations."

It has already been suggested that the Arts committee dealt principally with very practical decision issues as, for example, the rules and procedures which would apply to the supervision of the dissertation. The instrumental character of the committee's behaviour seems well reflected in further

remarks made by the subject quoted above. He commented, for example, that

It wasn't a question of whether we should offer this or that. It was a question of just getting through the document for serious discussion - but as a document. We were all just proofreaders. We were reduced to proofreading.

This same subject described the development of the course as a "chairman-led thing" and noted that, overall, "there was not much debate at all." In elaborating on this, he commented:

There was the sense that no-one really had a lot of experience in these things and, moreover, the administrative cultural base is one which doesn't encourage dissension or whatever from the chair's position. The chair was just ramrodding this [the submission document] through.

Whilst the issue of the academic credibility of the proposed Master of Arts aroused momentary tension, this tension never became overt conflict. As the one subject who dissented from what was being proposed noted, debate quickly subsided. This subject, looking back on the meetings, remarked:

When I raised criticisms, I was seen to be not working with the team, so I didn't say much after that. I was seen to be creating waves, so I kept the peace and tried not to get involved.

And, in summing up his view on how the committee acted, he commented:

Let's just say that it was goal-oriented rather than process-oriented.

This statement in itself suggests that wide-ranging debate about issues was not a notable feature of the Arts committee's behaviour.

The Education Committee In contrast to the Arts committee, the Education committee engaged in vigorous debate about a range of issues. These included the following: the relationship between course work and research components; the weighting to be given to the dissertation; the

inclusion of a project as distinct from a dissertation; the number and nature of the core units; the nature of the research methods unit; the length of the course; the criteria for entry both to the course as a whole and to areas of specialisation; staffing; and the determination of areas of specialisation.

Of these issues, there were three which were vigorously contested and it is these which will be examined here. These three issues were those of staffing, the closely related issue of the determination of areas of specialisation, and the issue of entry criteria.

No other issue so preoccupied the Education committee as did the issue of staffing. It was described by one subject as "an important and contentious issue" and by another as "a recurrent issue." The latter noted also that

It [the staffing issue] comes back again and again and again.

The issue of staffing was given a distinctive interpretation by the Education committee. In the words of the Chairman, the committee was concerned with "what would be accepted as legitimate criteria" governing the staffing of units in the master's course. On this point, he commented as follows:

We considered what the staff had to do to become involved in the programme, what they had to have done - and were fairly tough on them. Probably too tough. We may have excluded a lot of people who had the capacity to contribute.

These words of the Chairman suggest that the committee was not concerned with the question of whether additional staff might be needed for the proposed course. In determining criteria for "legitimate involvement," the committee was principally concerned with assessing the adequacy of the existing staff's qualifications - their appropriateness to the task of teaching at a higher degree level. In a sense the preoccupying question became: who, from the existing staff, can be permitted to teach into the proposed master's

course? That this was so is borne out by a number of comments. In the next excerpt, a subject is explaining that staffing was a particularly important issue. He noted that:

It was staffing mainly in the sense of who would be permitted to teach into the master's. Actual sheets went out to all staff members - like a profile. They had to fill it out and submit it back, and then that was all tabled and they went through with a profile of each person on the staff to see.. It was almost like.. [unfinished]

This subject is alluding here to the fact that the committee, at one point, required all staff to complete a profile of their qualifications.

Again on the staffing issue, another subject remarked that:

There was concern about who should actually be involved in the master's programme and a little bit of politics about that as an internal thing. There was a strong push to have only people with certain qualifications involved and a document was produced specifying exactly who should be involved and what qualifications they needed. This document was produced either about the same time or even before discussions about the structure. So it's an interesting focus the committee had. They were concerned about status and..they reckoned only certain people could be involved in the master's degree.

Commenting further, this same subject noted that:

There was the feeling that you can't establish a master's that meets acceptable standards unless you started with people who had certain qualifications. At one point in time the committee was saying that only people with PH.Ds could do this, that is, teach and supervise, lead up specialisations, etc. It became clear eventually that we didn't have enough of those people to put it into effect. At some point in time we were going to back off...

Both of the previous quotations indicate that at least some members of the committee had reservations about the particular interpretation which the committee gave the staffing issue. The first quotation suggests that the

actions of the committee may have been imbued with an inspectorial and judgmental quality. The second suggests that the staffing issue may have been accompanied by a degree of internal politics.

The staffing issue was closely linked with another, namely, the determination of areas of specialisation. In explaining the contentious nature of this issue, one subject commented in the following way:

The argument was about areas without highly qualified staff or where staff didn't have the academic qualifications - should these areas be included as offerings within the master's degree. There was a large amount of discussion on this issue.

This comment in itself suggests that the determination of specialisations was, at least for the Education committee, as much a staffing issue as a curriculum issue.

What was noteworthy about this particular issue, however, was the conflict associated with it. In the words of the Associate Dean (Academic), it was this issue that "generated the most heat and a lot of discord."

Two proposed areas of specialisation, in particular, were the focus of conflict. These were the specialisations, 'children's literature' and 'education of the gifted,' the last being the Dean's field of specialisation. The Associate Dean (Academic) remarked specifically on the political dynamics which, in his opinion, accompanied the decision-making about these areas. In speaking of the children's literature specialisation, he commented that:

They [some committee members] felt the staff in children's literature weren't adequately qualified. Now that I think was just a game.

And again, he noted that

The people on the committee who were making some of those judgments were out for a bit of blood, I think.

In a similar vein, this same subject described certain actions of the

committee as a “witch-hunt,” especially those surrounding the exclusion of the Dean’s area of specialisation. Whilst discussing the issues of staffing and specialisations, he commented:

It was a witch-hunt quite frankly. One of the people witch-hunted was the Dean. He was witch-hunted because there were many statements about ‘You realise of course that the Dean is not eligible to teach in the Master’s degree.’ Now the Dean saw himself as being very eligible, but a lot of staff didn’t, so you realise that there was a political gain that was going on there.

The Dean himself described the activities of the committee as “power-play,” commenting that:

I found the staffing issue offensive. A way of showing how important something was. A cynical thing - a way of keeping people out. It was a way of being exclusive and not inclusive and that’s what I think was quite offensive. It was really just power-play.

He went on to express surprise at the behaviour of the committee, given what he saw to be his prominence in the particular subject field (“And here I am - international expert”).

The Education committee’s examination of the issue of entry criteria is the third and final issue to be considered here. What is especially interesting about this issue is that the term “elitist” was used to describe the outlook of one particular group of subjects. This group, of whom the chairman was one, favoured a relatively high level of entry to the proposed master’s course. As one subject put it:

One school of thought advocated honours degrees as being an acceptable entry level and then B.Eds with Distinction because CAEs didn’t offer honours degrees.

The group who held this view also vigorously opposed the proposal that Graduate Diploma units be used to gain credit towards the completion of a master’s award.

It was this particular perspective on entry criteria that led to the comment that “quite an elitist view was taken on entry.” It led also to the claim that the committee’s behaviour was, at least in some respects, “over-compensating” behaviour. One subject, for example, commented that

This concern with entry goes back to standards and people trying to prove that CAEs can offer a Master’s degree.

In summary then, it can be noted that the Education committee’s treatment of the three issues pertaining to staffing, specialisations and entry criteria had a number of features in common. All three were strongly contested issues and, in at least two of such, this contestation involved a degree of conflict. More importantly, it is possible to see the three issues as being animated by a single underlying concern - a concern that the future Master of Education be characterised by appropriate academic standards. Such a concern would be expected and is, in itself, unexceptional. It takes on additional significance given the claim that the preoccupation with standards may have represented over-compensation on the part of the committee. This claim may itself be debateable. Undoubtedly, however, it seems that the committee aimed at, was perhaps preoccupied with, the development of a Master of Education that would be at least the equal of similar courses in established universities.

The Information Technology Committee By comparison with the Education committee, the overall range of issues which preoccupied the Information Technology group were fewer in number. Three were identified as focal: issues relating to prospective markets, resources and the structure of the proposed course. The discussions which accompanied these three broad issues were so “free-wheeling” that no one appeared to predominate.

On the issue of potential markets, the Information Technology committee considered

the kind of student that we might try to produce and the kind of market that we might place that student into.

In the concluding stages of one meeting, the Dean himself commented:

If I'm to sell this course I need to know who we are aiming the course at.

Issues connected with the marketing of the proposed courses were considered by all three committees, but with very different degrees of emphasis. Little attention was given to this subject by the Arts committee. Nor was the question of demand for the proposed master's considered at any great length by the Education committee. This was mainly because the Education committee utilised work carried out when a systemic Master of Education was being developed. When the independent Master of Education was being developed, the committee accepted, almost as a given, the existence of a demand for the proposed Master of Education. Undoubtedly, the issue of prospective markets was most in evidence in the deliberations of the Information Technology committee.

The importance assigned to the question of resources by the Information Technology committee has already been noted. As one subject put it:

Resources were a big issue - trying to get as many things in common as possible, so resources can be utilised efficiently.

Information pertaining to both resources and markets was seen as being directly relevant to, indeed as influencing decision-making about the structure of the proposed course.

The third focal decision issue - the structure of the proposed Master of Information Technology course - was addressed in a way which was designed principally to elicit ideas. In this sense the Information Technology committee functioned in exactly the opposite way from the Arts committee whose activities were task-directed and goal-oriented. The chairman of the Information Technology committee himself used the term "brainstorming" to describe the manner in which the committee addressed

the subject of the structure of the course.

The discussions of the Information Technology committee concerning structure were notable also in one other respect. What was to become the single most important, and certainly the most contested issue in the development of the Master of Information Technology, emerged during the committee's consideration of the structure of the proposed course. This was the issue of "which themes and issues should be reflected in the Information Systems major" or, in other words, "the focus of the Information Systems major."

The chairman of the committee, in the next excerpt, is describing his perceptions of the emergence of this issue. He remarked:

Then followed a meeting of the Course Development Committee in which everybody was invited who was interested at all in computing and information systems, and which included everybody in the school except some of the mathematicians, to brainstorm what would be the nature of the Information Systems major. Here the objective was to come up with ideas and to try to narrow down some themes that people at the meeting would be most happy with. They were looking at the area of Information Systems from the point of view of its overall design or architecture, the overall structure of the area and the nature of Information Systems as such...

He goes on to allude to the tensions surrounding the emergence of this issue, commenting:

This [the brainstorming of ideas] was seen as a load of rubbish by some and a waste of time by those that saw the main theme or issue as Information Systems Management. They set about dismantling the brainstorming and discrediting most of the people who had suggested issues by simply saying - while these people are doing masters there's no way they will be teaching into the course. So all this activity was terminated because of the desires of one or two individuals.

Insofar as conflict was experienced by the Information Technology course development committee, it occurred mainly in relation to this one issue -

the issue of the focus of the Information Systems subject major.

This particular issue, however, will be considered in detail in a subsequent section dealing with the functions of the Information Systems specialist group. Suffice it to note here that the issue emerged during meetings of the course development committee and was intimately linked to the emergence of other key decision-making units, namely, the specialist groups - or what were called by the Information Technology subjects, "discipline groups."

Decision-Making Methods

In the following discussion there is no attempt made at a detailed analysis of the methods of decision-making. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter. The methods of decision-making will be briefly compared, with special attention being given to the methods used to resolve contentious issues. This section will conclude with a brief comparison of the approaches of the three chairmen to the task of decision-making.

The methods of decision-making adopted by the three committees are probably best described as being consensus-oriented. Despite divergence of opinion, a 'meeting of minds' was usually reached, and whilst certain members may not have been completely happy with a final decision, there was usually general agreement about a particular direction to be taken. This said, however, there was also some evidence of behaviour, notably on the part of the Arts and Education committees (and principally by the chairmen of these committees) which may sometimes have inhibited the expression of divergent views. In order therefore to provide some further insight into the ways in which actual decisions were reached, a comparison is now made of the manner in which the most contentious issues were resolved.

On the issue of the theoretical vis-à-vis practical elements in the proposed Master of Arts (Asian Studies), all but one of the committee members supported the proposed course structure and the chairman ruled in favour of the majority view. It will be recalled that the one dissenting member (the Head of the Communications programme) had been critical of the proposed course on the grounds that it was essentially a-theoretical. The chairman's

exact words when resolving this issue, were:

Well look that cannot work. We cannot compromise to accommodate your view, therefore the majority view will prevail...

It was at this point that the one dissenting subject decided “not to contest any more issues.” As he explained later, he opted at this point to “just keep the peace and go along with the others rather than rock the boat.” Despite the reservations of this one committee member, it is nonetheless true that the decision-making procedure of the Arts committee here conforms, overall, with a consensus mode.

The most contested issue in the development of the Master of Education involved the determination of areas of specialisation. This was an on-going issue which comprised a series of negotiations before its final resolution. During this process of negotiation, especially in relation to two proposed specialisations (children’s literature and education of the gifted), there may have been some tendency to depart from a consensus approach. Nevertheless, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that, on balance, the Education committee functioned in a way which was consensus-oriented. Despite the recommendation of two members that the children’s literature specialisation be excluded, for example, the whole committee resolved otherwise. On this point, the Associate Dean (Academic), noted that

In the end I came back with more arguments..and they [the children’s literature specialisation] got in.

That the Education committee attempted to follow, overall, a consensus approach was confirmed by a number of subjects. One commented specifically on the appropriateness of such an approach to the task of “trying to put things together and come up with the shape of a master’s degree.” Another saw the work of the committee as representing “an extremely democratic process in terms of content and structure.”

It is also noteworthy that, although the Associate Dean (Academic) expressed reservations about the negotiations surrounding the children’s literature

specialisation, he nonetheless confirmed that decisions of the committee were arrived at after extensive talk involving the negotiation of opposing ideas and viewpoints. As he put it:

They [the committee] talked them [the issues] through and in the end they just came to agreement.

Thus, in the final analysis, the Associate Dean (Academic) too saw the work of the Education committee as being, in his own words, "pretty much a strong committee process."

The most contentious issue in the development of the Master of Information Technology concerned the structure of the Information Systems subject major. Whilst this issue emerged at the level of the course development committee, it was resolved by the Information Systems specialist group. Thus the decision-making methods used to resolve it are omitted from the discussion here. They are examined in the next chapter.

Where other issues were concerned, the Information Technology committee functioned in a way that was consistent with a consensus approach. However, any discussion of the committee's decision-making must recognise the essentially 'brainstorming' nature of the committee's deliberations. The meetings of the committee were actually criticised by some subjects for the absence of very specific decision outcomes. They were viewed as "fuzzy," as "unproductive," as "not getting anywhere" with the task of course development. It is probably more accurate to say that specific decisions at this stage remained inchoate. Actual decisions existed in embryonic form, as it were.

In summary, the decision-making methods of the three course development committees were similar insofar as all three adopted a consensus mode of functioning. The brainstorming nature of the Information Technology committee's deliberations, however, not only differentiated this committee from the remaining two, it also made description of the actual decision-making procedures used difficult.

It is instructive to conclude this discussion of decision-making methods with a brief comparison of the ways in which the three chairmen approached the task of decision-making. This comparison suggests some differences in the three approaches.

The approach of the chairman of the Information Technology committee could be described justifiably as being 'open', democratic and consistent with a highly participatory approach to decision-making. He himself commented that he favoured a consensus mode of decision-making and there was evidence of this in his conduct of meetings. He attempted to gather extensive information. It was on his initiative that invitations to participate on the committee were extended to all staff members without exception. He encouraged all participants to freely express their ideas and to 'talk through' issues and in this way he was largely responsible for the brainstorming nature of the committee's deliberations.

The chairman of the Arts committee adopted an approach which contrasted with that of the former. Whereas the Information Technology committee chairman opened the meetings to all and encouraged the expression of a diversity of ideas, his counterpart on the Arts committee, from the first meeting, focused discussion on the preparation of a course submission document. In subsequent meetings, he was also responsible for focusing attention on an examination of details within various drafts of the submission. He himself described the decision-making as representing "a mixture of consultation and consensus" and it is true that, overall, actual decision-making procedure appeared to conform with a consensus approach. On the other hand, it might also be said that the chairman's preoccupation with the submission appeared to have a somewhat limiting effect. It tended to militate against the development of a wide-ranging discussion and possibly against the expression of divergent views.

The approach of the chairman of the Education committee appears to have varied. He encouraged wide-ranging discussion of most issues and he described himself as always favouring a consensus approach to decision-making. In his view, it was the committee as a whole that had the responsibility for decision making. That is, he did not see the committee as

being advisory to himself. On this point he commented as follows:

I never made a decision without the advice and guidance of the committee. I always prefer to have all the support of the committee rather than act on my own and every committee I've had has been like that.

In discussing the way in which decisions were made on the course development committee, he stated:

It was always a committee decision that was made, or a resolution, or a consensus.

However, especially with regard to the issue of specialisations, there may have been sometimes a tendency, on the part of the chairman, to attempt to superimpose his own perspective. The negotiations surrounding the inclusion of the specialisations - education of the gifted and children's literature - are cases in point. A group of two members (who included the chairman) made recommendations about these specialisations - but seemingly without allowing those who represented these specialisations to fully present their cases.

It is noteworthy also that at least two subjects expressed reservations as to whether the chairman of the Education committee always adopted "a truly consensus approach." One of these noted that, in his opinion, the chairman was not always willing to allow people to express their views. This same subject also described the chairman as being "outcome oriented" rather than "people oriented." The Associate Dean (Academic), as has already been indicated, expressed somewhat similar views. He noted that, on certain issues, the chairman pressed his own views so strongly that this may have militated against the achievement of a true (in the sense of a genuine) consensus. Whilst speaking of the chairman's approach to certain issues, the Associate Dean (Academic) stated:

The others gave in to him [the chairman] in the end and went along with him, although they might have argued with him. On certain issues he was forcing the point. As a chairman he had an obsession with standards.

In summary, it seems that there were both similarities and differences in the three chairmen's approaches. All three, for the most part, adopted a consensus approach to decision-making, with the chairman of the Information Technology committee probably best exemplifying what is sometimes called an 'open', democratic approach. He was clearly process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented. Whilst the chairman of the Arts committee could not be described as autocratic, he pursued the completion of the task, perhaps at the expense of process. There was a tendency on his part towards behaviour that may have constrained the expression of certain ideas or opinions. The approach of the chairman of the Education committee was different again. He could be described as a forceful chairman who held strong views on certain matters, views which he may sometimes have attempted to impose upon the committee.

Conclusion

The writer has now completed the first of a two-part description of the administrative arrangements used for decision-making by the academic administrators. It is a description which also incorporates a comparison of the arrangements used in the three sub-cultures. The following points include a summary of the main similarities and differences between those aspects of the administrative arrangements so far described.

Firstly, in this chapter, the principal administrative units used to introduce the masters' courses were identified. A comparison of these units indicates that there were three main types: course development committees, specialist groups and centralised units such as school boards. With the exception of the specialist groups, these units were common to the three development processes. Specialist groups were not used in the development of the Master of Arts. In addition, in two of the sub-cultures, certain individuals were identified as administrative units. These were: the Dean of Arts and the Associate Dean (Academic), Information Technology. Overall then, across

the three sub-cultures, there were both similarities and differences in the administrative units used for decision-making. On balance, however, there were more similarities than there were differences.

Secondly, in this chapter, the functions of one principal administrative unit - the course development committee - have been described. This description revealed major differences in the functioning of the three course development committees.

The behaviour of the Arts committee appeared to be strongly functionalist in character. This was so despite the low degree of formality characterising the meetings, as evidenced in their sparse documentation. The committee gave priority to the making of very detailed decisions about the more technical aspects of course design. In its preoccupation with the completion of the course submission document, the committee appeared to be much more 'product-oriented' than it was 'process-oriented'. There was little activity of the kind that might be called 'brainstorming' and very little contestation of ideas. One issue provoked some debate but this quickly subsided. Whilst the decision-making was consensus-oriented in mode, the approach of the committee chairman was such that it may have constrained the expression of a wide diversity of views. His approach may have reinforced the committee's tendency to be strongly task-oriented. In sum, the Arts committee's functioning was imbued with an instrumental quality which differentiated it from the remaining two committees.

The Arts and Information Technology committees were similar in that there were relatively few meetings and a low degree of formality characterised these meetings. However, the two committees were quite different in other important ways. The features which differentiated the Information Technology committee from the Arts committee include the following: the 'open-ended' composition of the committee; the brainstorming aspect of its decision-making; an emphasis on issues relating to resources and markets; and a consistently consensus-oriented approach to decision-making.

The Information Technology committee was the only one in which the

chairman invited all interested academic staff members and sought their contributions. Whilst the Arts committee was criticised by one subject for a lack of wide-ranging debate, the Information Technology committee was criticised for exactly the opposite kind of behaviour. It was criticised for a lack of very specific decision outcomes. The brainstorming of ideas was seen by some to have hampered progress towards the completion of a submission document.

The decision issues that were central to the Information Technology committee's deliberations included issues relating to the structure of the course, the existence of potential markets and the question of resources. In particular, two of these issues were assigned much more importance by this committee than they were by the Arts and Education committees. These were the issues of resources and markets. The Information Technology committee saw as imperative the bringing together of course areas in order to maximise the use of available resources. It was concerned with the efficient utilisation of resources and, of the three committees, it was the most aware of the financial implications of the proposed master's course. Similarly, it addressed the question of potential market niches and the related issue of marketing in more detail than did either of the other committees.

Whilst all three committees were consensus-oriented to some extent, this description most fits the functioning of the Information Technology committee. Indeed the strong emphasis of the chairman on an 'open', democratic, consensus-oriented process may have been why the committee was seen by some as being "unproductive" and as "not getting anywhere." Of the three chairmen, the chairman of the Information Technology committee seemed to be the most consistent in the use of a consensus-oriented approach to decision-making.

The Education committee differed from the remaining two committees in a number of ways. It was the only committee which did not contain representatives from the whole body of academic staff. It will be recalled that the Arts committee invited three academic staff members and that the Information Technology committee invited all interested academic staff

members. Again, the Education committee can be differentiated from the other two because of the greater number of meetings held. In addition, the meetings were more formalised and there was a much greater range of documentation utilised by the committee.

Another important feature which differentiated the Education committee from its Arts and Information Technology counterparts was the way in which it addressed the issue of staffing. Whereas the Information Technology committee addressed this issue mainly from a financial perspective, the Education committee was preoccupied with establishing criteria relating to qualifications and experience.

The Education committee also addressed in depth a much wider range of decision issues than did the remaining two committees. There were more issues identified as focal decision issues. Indeed the term 'issue-laden' was used to describe this aspect of the committee's functioning. There was also more contestation of issues - issues such as those relating to staffing, the determination of areas of specialisation and entry criteria. Underlying the committee's examination of these issues, moreover, was a concern with the question of academic standards, a concern that was not as evident in the deliberations of other committees. It was also noted that this concern with academic standards may have represented over-compensation on the committee's part, a claim that was made by at least two of the subjects from the Education sub-culture. In their opinion, the "soul-searching" of the committee arose from the desire to develop a course that was in no way academically inferior to similar courses offered by established universities.

Whether or not the Education committee engaged in over-compensating behaviour, two points are clear. Firstly, the committee addressed its task with a certain intensity, an intensity that was lacking in the deliberations of the other committees. Indeed, the functioning of the committee seems to have reflected a conviction that a highly important task was at hand. Secondly, the Master of Education development process appeared to be especially thorough - certainly more thorough than was the Master of Arts development process.

In this chapter the administrative units for decision-making used in the three development processes have been identified. In addition, the functions of one unit, the course development committee, have been considered. To complete the description of administrative arrangements, the functions of the other administrative units identified must be considered, as must the relationships between the administrative units. These topics are the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 10

The Administrative Arrangements: Part 2

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The Functions of the Specialist Groups

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The Deans (Arts and Information Technology)

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Introduction

Two major aspects of the administrative arrangements used for decision-making remain to be examined: firstly, the functions of administrative units other than the course development committees; secondly, the relationships between the administrative units. These are the subjects of the present chapter.

The administrative units whose functions will be described include the following: the specialist groups; the Deans of Arts and Information Technology; the Associate Dean (Academic), Information Technology; the School Board; and two Heads of Programme - the Acting Head of the Bachelor of Education Programme and the Head of Programme (Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children).

Again, as with the course development committees, the functions of the specialist groups will be described with reference to six characteristics: composition; meeting activity; formality; decisions; focal decision issues; and method of making decisions. However, where individual actors are administrative units, it will be obvious that characteristics such as composition and formality, for example, are inappropriate. Thus, in describing the functions of the two Deans, the Associate Dean (Academic), and the two Heads of Programme, the emphasis will fall on the decisions that were made by these actors.

As with the description in the previous chapter, the discussion will include, from the beginning, a comparison of the functions of the administrative units used across the three cases. A similar procedure will be used in discussing the subject of relationships. The purpose of this is again to highlight the similarities and differences in the arrangements used.

The Functions of the Specialist Groups

Groups of specialist staff were important administrative units in two of the three development processes, namely, those used in the development of the Master of Education and Master of Information Technology. In this section, the functions of the specialist groups used in the development of these two courses, will be identified and compared.

At the outset a major difference can be noted between the parallel sets of specialist groups. Whereas for the Master of Education the course development committee was unquestionably the primary decision-making unit, there is a sense in which, in the development of the Master of Information Technology, the specialist groups assumed decision-making prominence. For the proposed Master of Education, the specialist groups were formed in the very concluding stages of the development process, whereas for the Master of Information Technology they were formed at an early stage. When formed, moreover, the Information Technology specialist groups took over the functions of the course development committee which did not meet again.

Composition

As the name implies, the specialist groups were composed of staff with knowledge and expertise in particular subject areas.

In the development of the Master of Information Technology, there were three groups comprising staff with knowledge of the proposed subject majors, namely, Applied Mathematics and Statistics, Information Science, and Information Systems.

In the development of the Master of Education there were eight specialist groups. Two of these comprised staff with knowledge of the two proposed core units, one of these being a unit on research methods and the other

being on contemporary issues in education. The remaining six groups corresponded to the proposed specialisations: educational management, curriculum studies, special education and school psychology, physical education and human movement, distance education pedagogy, and children's literature.

The specialist groups used in the development of both Masters' courses were characteristically small in size with approximately three staff members to a group. Where the specialist group coincided with a course programme, the leader was the head of that particular programme. Otherwise, the leader was a staff member with a reputation for teaching or research in the area. It must be emphasised that in all but four of the total eleven specialist groups, the leader was one of the academic administrators who are the subjects of this study. The four groups which were led by an academic staff member included those in the areas of research methods, contemporary issues in education, distance education pedagogy and children's literature.

Whilst most of the groups were small in size, the exception was the Information Systems specialist group. This group contained all the staff members working in the area, a total of about ten. The size of this particular group, however, fluctuated, as one of its members (the Head of the Graduate Studies Programme) invited staff from the Applied Mathematics and Information Science groups to attend meetings. This particular administrator, it will be recalled, had acted as chairman of the Information Technology course development committee and his behaviour was similar in both settings.

Three of the six areas of specialisation for the proposed Master of Education corresponded with existing teaching programmes. Thus the specialist group concerned with educational management comprised all the staff from the Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration Programme, whilst the groups concerned with both special education and children's literature comprised all teaching staff from the Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children Programme and the Graduate Diploma in Children's Literature Programme.

In contrast, none of the specialist groups formed for the Master of Information Technology was based on existing course programmes. The subject areas which the three groups represented were much broader than those represented by the specialist groups for the Master of Education. Indeed the three specialist groups for the Master of Information Technology were viewed by the staff themselves as based on disciplines and were in fact referred to as "discipline groups."

Meeting Activity

None of the specialist groups in either development process held a large number of meetings. Most groups met approximately three times. The exceptions to this were the Educational Management group and the Information Systems group. These were the most active groups in terms of numbers of meetings held, the former meeting seven times and the latter five times.

Formality

The degree of formality as evidenced by documentation varied. Most specialist groups were formalised to a very low degree. The Master of Education Research Methods Group, for example, issued statements summarising their ideas (e.g., Research Methods Team, *Memorandum*, 31st July 1989). These statements were then used in presentations to the course development committee. However, the meetings of the Research Methods Group, like those of most other specialist groups, were not formalised to the extent that agendas and minutes accompanied meetings.

A somewhat higher degree of formality characterised the meetings of three groups - those developing the content of the educational management, special education and children's literature specialisations. These were groups whose members coincided with the staff of existing course programmes. The meetings of these groups were accompanied by formal agendas and minutes of meetings (e.g., Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration, Programme Consultative Committee, *Notice of Meeting*, 25th July 1989; *Minutes of meeting*, 25th July 1989).

Of the Information Technology specialist groups, the meetings of the Information Systems group were characterised by the highest degree of formality. Agendas were produced for four of the five meetings of this group (e.g., Information Systems Discipline Team, *Notices of Meeting*, 28th June 1991 and 4th July 1991). Whilst minutes of meetings were not produced, the leader of the group issued reports on four of the meetings (see, for example, Information Systems Discipline Meeting, *Report*, 16th August 1991). In addition, a detailed report was issued by the group leader following the meeting of the 16th August 1991 (*Progress Report on the Development of New Units in the IS Major*, August 1991). There were position statements produced by interested members (e.g., Head of Graduate Studies Programme, *Comments re Simulation as Decision Support*, 15th August 1991). By comparison with other specialist groups used in the development of the two masters' courses, the Information Systems specialist group was characterised by a high degree of formality.

Decisions

The decisions made by the specialist groups were always decisions about the actual content of units - whether these be core units or units comprising subject majors or specialisations. In this respect the specialist groups contrasted with the course development committees. In only one instance did a course development committee involve itself in questions about content. In the proposed Master of Education, the course development committee oversights the planning of the research methods unit. With respect to all other units, it accepted the recommendations of the specialist groups.

The decision-making of the Education specialist groups can be illustrated by reference to the group developing the educational management specialisation. The group's task was to choose firstly a leading theme for the specialisation - in effect, a thematic focus for the specialisation. The theme chosen was 'leadership for school improvement' (Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration, Programme Consultative Committee, *Minutes of Meeting*, 25th July 1989). As its next step, the group chose a set of three units which would comprise the specialisation, before finally deciding on

the more detailed content of the units. The decision-making of most of the specialist groups followed this pattern. That is, decisions were made about a leading theme and this was followed by decisions on the specific units which would comprise a specialisation. The final step in this sequence was to decide the content of individual units. With respect to the core unit on contemporary issues, the group made decisions about a conceptual framework for the unit, as well as the specific issues that would be examined in the unit.

The specialist groups in the proposed Master of Information Technology followed a similar pattern as did the Education specialist groups. They made decisions about the orientation and content of the individual units comprising the Applied Mathematics and Statistics and the Information Systems subject majors.

Focal Decision Issues

There was a sense in which the issues that were focal to the deliberations of the specialist groups were one and the same as the issues addressed by these groups. As already explained, these were issues associated with content - the content of proposed subject majors or core units and specialisations.

If, however, contestation were to be taken as an indicator of a 'focal' issue, then, insofar as the Education specialist groups were concerned, there were no such issues. Conflict was notably absent from the proceedings of the Education specialist groups. The decisions on the content of specialisations and units were reached after discussions which were devoid of marked disagreements.

In Information Technology, the proceedings of the Applied Mathematics and Statistics group were characterised by a similar smoothness. The leader of this group (the Head of the Applied Mathematics and Statistics Programme) described its activities in the following way:

There was very little debate here. The focus was clear from the start. There was debate but there was a very strong consensus for what we arrived at. Not too much difficulty here. The focus to be on numerical modelling, statistics and operation research, and on simulation. That's just a reflection of the strengths within the school. These three areas reflect the strengths in the school. So the maths area went very smoothly - no problems.

However, if 'smoothness' is an apt descriptor for the manner in which most of the specialist groups functioned, then 'turbulence' best describes the functioning of one group - the Information Systems group. In this group there were two main contested issues. Firstly, there was the issue of the thematic focus of the Information Systems subject major. Secondly, there was the issue of the inclusion of a unit on research methods.

The leader of the Information Systems group explained the first of these issues in the following way:

The debate largely centred around the sort of structure that the Information Systems people wanted for the Information Systems major. Also the structure that the Information Science people wanted for the Information Systems major. The Information Science and Maths people were at meetings through the invitation of X [the Head of the Graduate Studies Programme and chairman of the course development committee]. At no stage were the Information Systems people interested in the structure of Information Science.

As this statement indicates, the meetings of the Information Systems group were 'opened up', as had been the course development committee, to staff from other areas.

Any discussion of the issues concerning the Information Systems subject major requires some reference to the different disciplinary backgrounds of those who comprised the Information Systems group. The conflict over the structure of this course was commonly referred to as one which involved "the commercials versus the analyticals." The background of 'the

analytics' lay in the disciplines of mathematics and science. They were comparatively small in number comprising five staff members, one of whom was the Head of the Graduate Studies Programme and chairman of the course development committee. As their name implies, they favoured the inclusion of an analytical emphasis in the Information Systems major. On the other hand, the background of 'the commercials' lay in the field of business management. The 'commercials' were committed to the view that the Information Systems major would have a 'management' focus.

At root the conflict between the two represented a philosophical divergence - each group having a different perception of the goals of teaching and research within the Information Systems area. The leader of the Information Systems specialist group (the Head of the Commercial Computing Programme) explained his perception of the conflict as follows:

Conflict or differences stem from the different backgrounds of people within Information Systems. The difficulty is reconciling the views, the aspirations and research interests of these two groups here and the difficulty was coming up with a mechanism to do this. The mechanism we finished up with was to say the major was to have a focus on Information Systems Management.

He went on to elaborate on the conflict between the two groups in the following way:

The units making up the major were taken by people such as myself and the Associate Dean (Academic) who represented commercial computing. But there was also Y group [i.e. the 'analytics']... Y group wanted another focus altogether, not a management focus. This was the bone of contention that plagued the process. The problem was incorporating the emphasis wanted by the analytical computing people. Y group proposed a focus called Information Systems. I argued that it made no sense at all to have a focus called Information Systems within the Information Systems major. It was a contradiction in terms. By and large this was seen as an unacceptable focus and communications then broke down.

The conflict over the issue of the Information Systems subject major also had a political dimension. There was a degree of status at stake - *who* would be represented within the future Master's course. At stake also was the allocation of resources. The particular subject area around which the Information Systems major was structured would receive a favourable allocation of resources and would do so at the expense of other areas. Indeed the limited resources that were available within the school was a factor which augmented competition between different groups.

Inevitably, then, the issue was accompanied by a degree of political activity. The 'commercials' lobbied strongly to ensure a management-related focus. The 'analytics' called on the assistance of the Information Science and Applied Mathematics groups. The members of these groups had backgrounds similar to those of the 'analytics' and were sympathetic to the outlook of the latter. One result of this was that, with respect to the inclusion of a unit on research methods, staff from all three groups made suggestions. The leader of the Information Systems group (the Head of the Commercial Computing Programme) commented on this in the following way:

The Information Science people made quite legitimate points but from their own perspective. For example, one issue was the inclusion of the research methodology unit. We steadfastly required this... The research methodology unit would form part of the core units of the Information Systems major. There was a great deal of debate about that. Particularly the maths people and to some degree the Information Science people - saw it as inappropriate to have a research methodology unit in there. They argued that the sort of subject that was covered in the proposed research methodology unit wasn't at all appropriate. We argued the opposite. I think now that both of us were right to the point that we were arguing from our own backgrounds. People with a background in Information Science have a requirement for a different sort of research methodology unit.

And to this comment he added:

That was the catalyst I think for us to formalise in a formal motion what the Information Systems degree was going to be around. We simply voiced our disapproval of people from other disciplines wanting to impose what we thought was an inappropriate structure, or making a comment on our major. We felt they were in a position to design and comment on their own major, but not on ours. That's what it boiled down to.

As the above passages indicate, there was a high degree of contestation associated with the structuring of the Information Systems subject major and the related issue of the inclusion of a research methods unit. This contestation was reflected in intense activity. At one point, for example, there was a sudden efflorescence of small groups or clusters of staff, all meeting and debating these issues. What were called "strand groups" emerged from the Information Systems specialist group itself. These included a "management strand group," a "development strand group," and a "design strand group." These groups had a very brief existence and their activities were difficult to document. They emerged spontaneously, met only once and then disappeared. The leader of the Applied Mathematics and Statistics group spoke of "different groups sort of growing like Topsy" and of "people planning different directions over the same issue."

In sum, the issue of the structure of the Information Systems subject major and the issue of the inclusion of a research methods unit in the same subject major can rightly be described as focal decision issues. In particular, the former issue was strongly contested and accompanied by intense activity that bordered on turbulence.

Method of Making Decisions

As with the course development committees, a consensus approach characterised the decision-making of most specialist groups. The members of the specialist groups conferred and then reached a consensus on the content of subject majors and specialisations. Very occasionally they sought the advice of outside experts.

The methods of the Information Systems group, however, involved a

departure from the consensus approach. It will be recalled from the previous section that this group was the locus of considerable conflict concerning the structure or thematic focus of the Information Systems subject major. Formalised methods of decision-making were used to resolve this issue. That is, formal motions were put forward and voting on the motions then took place. Of all the specialist groups, this was the only one to use the formal procedure of voting.

Moreover, voting on this issue took place on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, twelve votes were recorded in favour of a management focus, this being the particular focus favoured by the 'commercial'. Two votes were recorded in favour of the information systems focus, that is, the focus favoured by the 'analyticals'. On the second occasion when voting took place, the result was the same.

There were two attempts to resolve this issue essentially because the 'analyticals' refused to accept the first result as legitimate. From their perspective, the attempt to make the decisions by voting was unsatisfactory. As the Head of the Graduate Studies Programme, himself an 'analytical', remarked:

The meetings at which the voting occurred were stacked. Lots of tutors were called. The commercial computing group have the numbers - they've got the largest number of temporary people, people on contract. So they were able to exert a reasonable amount of power. The analytical computing group were outvoted by weight of numbers.

And, in a similar vein:

Whoever had more hands had all the votes and whichever group had most people in it..The voting did not count. It didn't change the way people felt, it didn't change any opinion - there was no way that various groups were then going to go with the majority.

In sum, it was his view that the voting was invalid because it "failed to ensure the support of those who lost out."

It is noteworthy that of all the administrative units identified across the three development processes, the Information Systems specialist group was the only one to use voting as a decision-making procedure.

With the failure of the voting method to effect a permanent resolution of the issue relating to the Information Systems subject major, the Dean was asked to resolve the conflict. The way in which the Dean of Information Technology acted as a decision-maker is discussed in the following section.

The Deans (Arts and Information Technology)

The Dean was significant as a decision-maker in two out of the three development processes - those for the Master of Arts and Master of Information Technology.

Of the three Deans, the Dean of Arts was undoubtedly the most proactive. In the initial stage of development, he himself shaped the future course through three key policy decisions. The first was a decision that the Master of Arts have a contemporary focus; the second, a decision that it incorporate two specialisations, Asian Studies and Communications; and the third, a decision that there be a core unit in cross-cultural communications. Such decisions are similar to those which other administrative units, as for example the Education course development committee, took considerable time resolving.

The Dean of Arts was also a significant actor in that he clearly established the terms of reference for the course development committee. The committee was to make recommendations to the Dean concerning the structure, content and format of the course. To this end, the Dean attended the first two meetings to ensure that "the formal parameters," as he put it, were well understood. This, he said, was "a management strategy" he often employed, its purpose being to minimise the need for future changes. He noted that, as a consequence of this strategy, the changes which he made as reports

emerged from the committee, were “fairly minimal.”

Unlike the Deans of Arts and Information Technology, the Dean of Education was not identified as an administrative unit in his own right. Whereas the Dean of Arts took action to shape the Master’s course from the outset, the Dean of Education played a minimal role throughout the entire development process. Although he was, in a formal sense, the final locus of authority, he was not involved in the actual decision-making process. He expressed the view that he did not like the way the Master of Education was being developed. He was, for example, unsympathetic to the incorporation of a strong research emphasis in the proposed course. In his own words this was the start of “this mystique about a university.”

The Dean of Information Technology was somewhat less influential than the Dean of Arts, but considerably more so than the Dean of Education. Whilst it could not be claimed that the Dean was central to the development of the Master of Information Technology, his influence was nonetheless felt in two main ways. Firstly, as a member of the course development committee, he had strongly advocated the use of a conceptual framework that would integrate the diverse areas of the course. Secondly, and more importantly, he acted as a key decision-maker in resolving the dispute over the thematic focus of the Information Systems subject major.

It will be recalled that on two separate occasions voting had failed to resolve this dispute. As a result the Dean was required to use his formal authority to make a final decision on the issue. From the perspective of one subject, the Associate Dean (Academic), “he [the Dean] was called in to say this is what you’ll bloody well do.” However, the Dean acted in a much less autocratic way than these words might suggest. He adopted a consultative and conciliatory approach calling an open meeting in which the chief protagonists in the dispute were invited to present their cases. In the Dean’s own words: “we talked it through.”

He explained the way in which he managed the situation as follows:

I identified where the tension was and got people involved to present their point of view in open forum and then we discussed it and I presented this model [the conceptual framework] again. This reminded people of their overall goals, the overall picture, and the first parts of the picture to be achieved. The remaining parts will be completed in the future. I feel people had lost sight of the conceptual model and once they recognised this, they again agreed that's what we ought to try and achieve.

The "model" to which the Dean refers here was the conceptual framework which he had been foremost in advocating as a member of the course development committee. The Dean's emphasis on this framework in the development process, explains why some subjects described his approach as "academic" rather than "administrative." In resolving the dispute over the Information Systems subject major, he made specific use of the framework. As he put it:

I reintroduced the conceptual model and got people to recognise that the management subset of the major is a top priority from what we can perceive out there in the market-place and it is also where most of our skills in the information systems area lies. So this ought to be developed as a priority. But recognise the skills of those in the design and development area and that they have a valid contribution to make to the total Information Systems environment, but they do not have enough skills in those areas at the moment to mount these as parts of the total major.

Thus, as this passage makes clear, the Dean ruled in favour of a management focus for two main reasons. Firstly, there was evidence that a strong market existed for a course which emphasised the management of information systems. Secondly, the available staffing expertise existed principally in this area.

Whilst this decision of the Dean, in a formal sense, resolved the issue of the thematic focus of the Information Systems subject major, it is interesting to note that the Dean's consultative approach was not viewed favourably by all of the members of the Information Systems group. For example, the leader of that group (the Head of the Commercial Computing Programme), whilst

being otherwise pleased with the decision, felt that it was “most unwise” of the Dean to call an open meeting. He commented that:

I feel it would have been a much better decision for [X] as Dean of the School to have made a decision himself, to have simply said the focus will be such and such and told us to get on with things. I feel that this would have been a much better administrative decision. The administrative view would have been: ‘Listen you’ve had long enough, you haven’t decided, this is what the answer’s going to be.’ Also from a political point of view he was seen to be placating the two groups and the two groups will never be placated. There are two mind-sets there and never will there be a meeting of the minds. They are quite legitimately different.

The decision made by the Dean was one which clearly favoured the ‘commercial’, although it did leave open the possibility that, in the future, an emphasis might be incorporated on analytical computing. It is interesting to note, in passing, the response of the ‘analyticals’. As the Head of the Graduate Studies Programme (the chairman of the course development committee), put it:

There’s not at the moment any analytical computing in the degree. There are no units for students who have majored in the analytical major of the Bachelor of Information Technology. They have to convert to a sudden interest in the management of Information Systems.

Thus, from the perspective of the ‘analyticals’, the conflict was one which was resolved “very narrowly.”

Associate Dean (Academic), Information Technology

The only Associate Dean (Academic) identified as an administrative unit in his own right was from the Information Technology sub-culture. This Associate Dean was neither a chairman of the course development committee, nor a leader of a specialist group. He was nonetheless responsible for a number of important decisions. It was his decision to introduce the specialist groups or, to use his own words, the "discipline groups." His stated reason was that decision-making about the subject majors should be made by academic staff from the relevant disciplines. There was, however, another explanation where the reasons were seen as being more political in nature. As the leader of the Applied Mathematics and Statistics specialist group put it:

The reason was to take responsibility for course development away from the Head of the Graduate Studies Program who was trying to allow room for analytical computing and who wanted a focus on information systems as a whole.

Whatever the reasons, the decision to introduce the specialist groups after only five meetings of the course development committee was a significant one. From this point, the course development committee did not meet again. Both the specialist groups and the Associate Dean (Academic) assumed increasing prominence as decision-makers, with the specialist groups making their recommendations direct to the Associate Dean (Academic).

There were also other important decisions made by the Associate Dean (Academic). He appointed both the chair of the course development committee and the leaders of the specialist groups. His appointment of the leader of the Information Systems specialist group was especially significant. It may have been a decision which influenced the outcome of the most contested issue in the development of the course. The leader appointed had a background similar to that of the Associate Dean (Academic) - that is, a

background in business management. Thus both were 'commercials' and unsympathetic to the incorporation of an emphasis on analytical computing. The opposition of the Associate Dean (Academic) to an emphasis on analytical computing is reflected in the following statement:

I had the role of saying 'No. I'm not going to accept that as an Associate Dean (Academic).' I examined other similar courses at other universities; did checks and found he was wrong - All of these didn't agree and I wasn't going to accept it, and that's what the person couldn't accept.

What the Associate Dean (Academic) is describing here is his own response to attempts by the the leader of the 'analytics' to broaden the focus of the Information Systems subject major.

*Acting Head of the Bachelor of Education Programme
and Head of the Graduate Diploma
in Exceptional Children*

Two Heads of Programme were identified as an administrative unit in the development of the Master of Education. The Acting Head of the Bachelor of Education Programme (the chairman of the course development committee) and the Head of the Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children were appointed by the course development committee to accomplish a specific task. They were not a sub-committee which existed for the same duration of time as did the course development committee. They were essentially an ad hoc committee formed for a limited time. Their task was to address the specific issue of areas of specialisation. To this end they were required to consult with staff interested in offering areas of specialisation and finally to recommend to the course development committee which areas should be included in the proposed Master's.

The group's response included the recommendation that five areas of

specialisation be included, namely, Curriculum, Educational Management, Distance Education Pedagogy, Human Movement, and Special Education. It included also the recommendation that two areas be excluded, namely, Children's Literature and Education of the Gifted.

Although the group were required to consult with staff, there is at least some evidence that they did not always employ a fully consultative mode of decision-making. This seems to be indicated by the comment of the Associate Dean (Academic) that

When they [the children's literature staff] put their submission up, no-one discussed it with them. The committee [the group of two] met behind closed doors and decided it wouldn't be in there...

The Associate Dean (Academic) also perceived the same group as a "McCarthy's committee." On this point, he commented:

The committee who had to judge who would have a specialisation or not, how adequately qualified, became a McCarthy's committee. They didn't get proper briefing from people but they made major decisions because they didn't like people, or didn't respect them, or something.

These comments seem to suggest that the decision-making pertaining to some specialisations may not always have been based on 'open' and democratic norms. However, it should also be recognised that despite the group's recommendation that the children's literature specialisation be excluded, the whole course development committee resolved otherwise.

The School Board

The final administrative unit identified was a School Board. As its name implies, it was integral to the formal authority structure of each school. Its role was one of providing “advice to the Dean on academic, personnel and resource matters relating to the operation of a School” (University College of Southern Queensland, School of Education, *Annual Report*, 1989, 4.1.1). With regard to academic matters, the functions of a Board included the monitoring of the development and implementation of courses (University College of Southern Queensland, School of Arts, *Submission for the Accreditation of a Master of Arts Degree*, 1990, 15.2). More specifically, these functions included the provision of advice to the Dean on “the preparation of reports and submissions to meet the accreditation, reaccreditation and review requirements of the Council” (University College of Southern Queensland, School of Education, *Annual Report*, 1989, 4.1.2b).

The composition of the three Boards being considered here was similar, in that they included senior academic administrators, elected members of the academic staff and elected student members. The Boards also included invited members such as Heads of Centres and Administrative Officers. The chairman of each Board was the Dean.

The three Boards being official, centrally located units were characterised by a relatively high degree of formality. Meetings were always accompanied by formal agendas and minutes.

Where the development of the proposed masters’ courses was concerned, the Boards were responsible for examining the course submissions prepared by the course development committees. Examination of the course submissions by the Boards represented the last important step in the developmental process internal to each school. The Boards concerned could recommend to the Dean acceptance of a submission. Alternatively, they could recommend further work on a submission or they might even reject a submission outright.

In two out of the three cases being considered here, the Board approved the *preliminary* course submissions - those for the Master of Arts and the Master of Information Technology. The preliminary submission for the Master of Education was approved by two units known as the School Course Planning and Review Committee and the Dean's Consultative Committee. The reasons why different units were involved early in the development of the Master of Education are solely historical. The Master of Education began to be developed in 1988, prior to the implementation of School Boards in 1989. In 1988, the School Course Planning and Review Committee and the Dean's Consultative Committee (the former being a sub-committee of the latter) performed functions which paralleled those of the later School Board.

Where the *final* course submission was concerned, in each of the three cases considered here, the relevant Board recommended to the Dean that the submission be accepted.

In the deliberations of the School Board in Arts, there were no issues which would be called focal decision issues. However, in both Education and Information Technology, the Boards considered at length issues pertaining to resources. The Education Board examined the question of staffing, especially in the sense of whether there were sufficient existing staff with the necessary qualifications to teach the future course. In Information Technology, the Board considered at length the additional staffing resources required to implement the course and the hardware and software resources required to support the course. It must be stressed that whilst these issues were focal to the deliberations of the Boards, they were never contested issues.

Moreover, it is important to note that little or no change was required in any of the final course submissions. The Boards could have called for amendments to the submissions or for major revision of them. Indeed it was not unusual for undergraduate or Graduate Diploma courses to be returned for major revision to the task forces or committees responsible for their development. In all three cases here, however, the course submissions

were readily approved. The three Boards could have registered substantial dissent, but significantly where these Master's courses were concerned, there was none. This suggests that the course development committees and/or specialist groups made decisions that were considered generally acceptable.

Relationships between the Administrative Units

In all three cases examined here, the formal relationships which existed between the administrative units identified were hierarchical. The course development committees made recommendations to the School Boards, who in turn made recommendations to the Deans. The specialist groups in Information Technology made recommendations to the Associate Dean (Academic), whilst in Education, the specialist groups made recommendations to the course development committee.

A hierarchical relationship can be defined more precisely. As was stated in Chapter One, p.16, such a relationship exists when one unit can regulate the functioning of another unit. Thus the formal relationship between each of the three School Boards and the relevant course development committee was hierarchical, because the former could require the latter to change a submission, or even to re-do a submission. Similarly, in Information Technology, the Associate Dean (Academic) could require the specialist groups to revise their recommendations.

The nature of the relationships which existed between the identified administrative units is illustrated on the following pages (343-44) in Figures 2-4.

Relationships between Administrative Units Identified in the Development of Three Masters' Courses

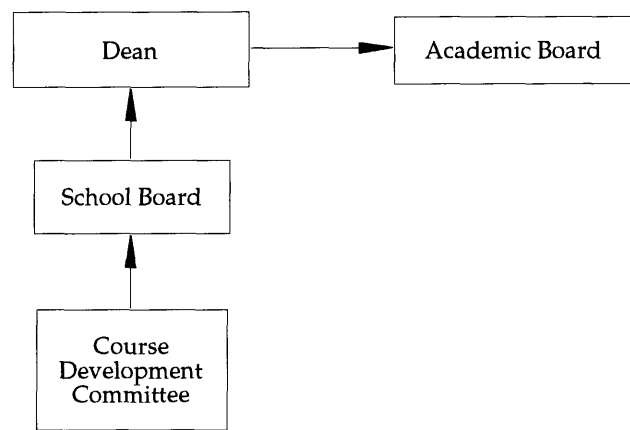


Figure 2 Relationships between Administrative Units in the Development of the Master of Arts

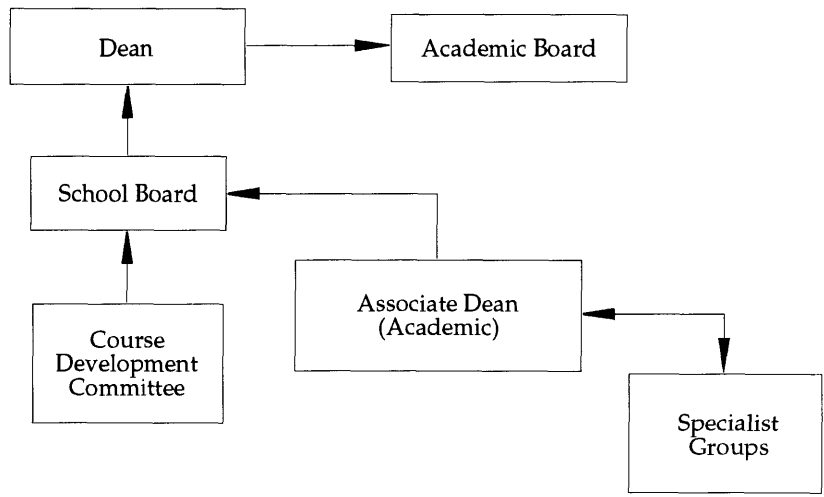


Figure 3 Relationships between Administrative Units in the Development of the Master of Information Technology

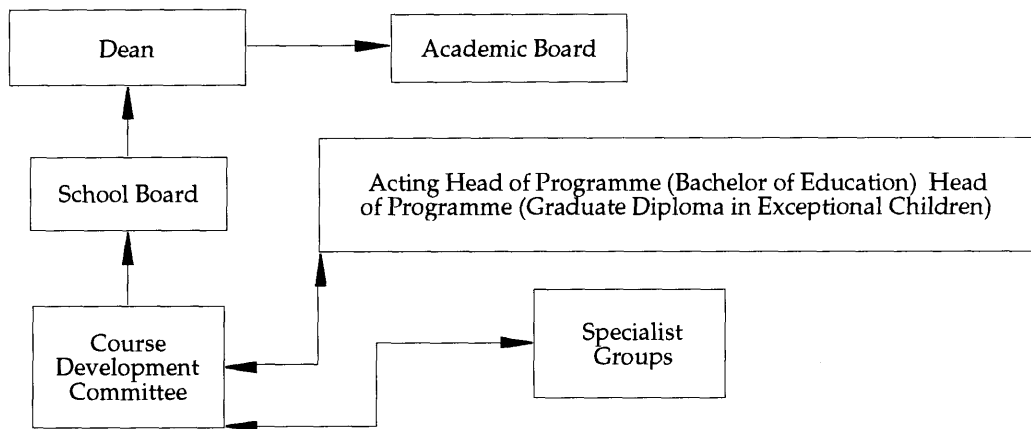


Figure 4
Relationships between Administrative Units
in the Development of the
Master of Education

In the preceding figures, Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchical nature of the relationships between the units involved in the development of the proposed Master of Arts. Similarly, Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchical relationships between the units involved in the development of the proposed Master of Information Technology and Figure 4, the hierarchical relationships between the units involved in the development of the proposed Master of Education.

It should be noted that a different kind of relationship - a parallel relationship - existed between the various specialist groups themselves. A parallel relationship, as defined in Chapter One (p.16), occurs when two or more units perform the same kind of function. The relationships between the specialist groups formed in the development of the proposed Master of Information Technology are illustrated in Figure 5 on the next page.

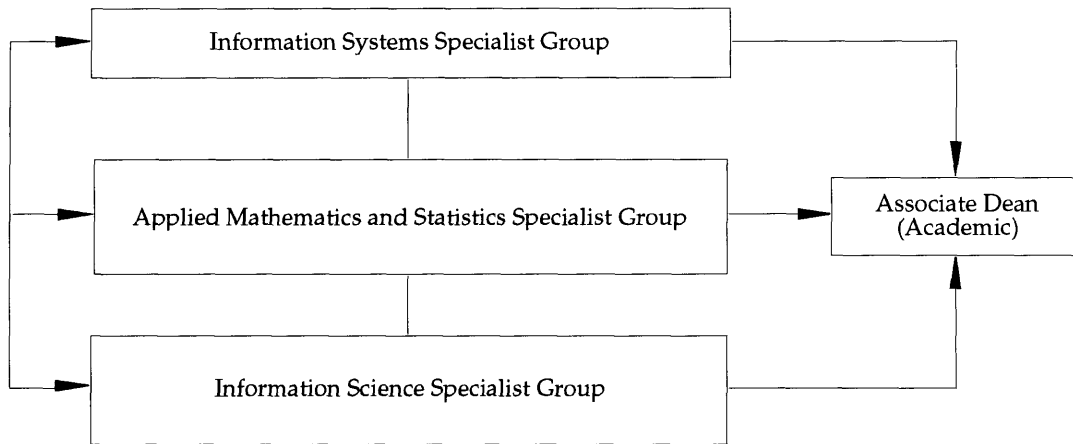


Figure 5
 Relationships between Three Specialist Groups
 in the Development of the Master
 of Information Technology

The relationship illustrated above is parallel in the sense that the three specialist groups had the same function, namely, to plan the content of the subject majors of the proposed Master of Information Technology.

The relationship between the specialist groups involved in the proposed Master of Education was similar in nature and is illustrated in Figure 6 on the next page.

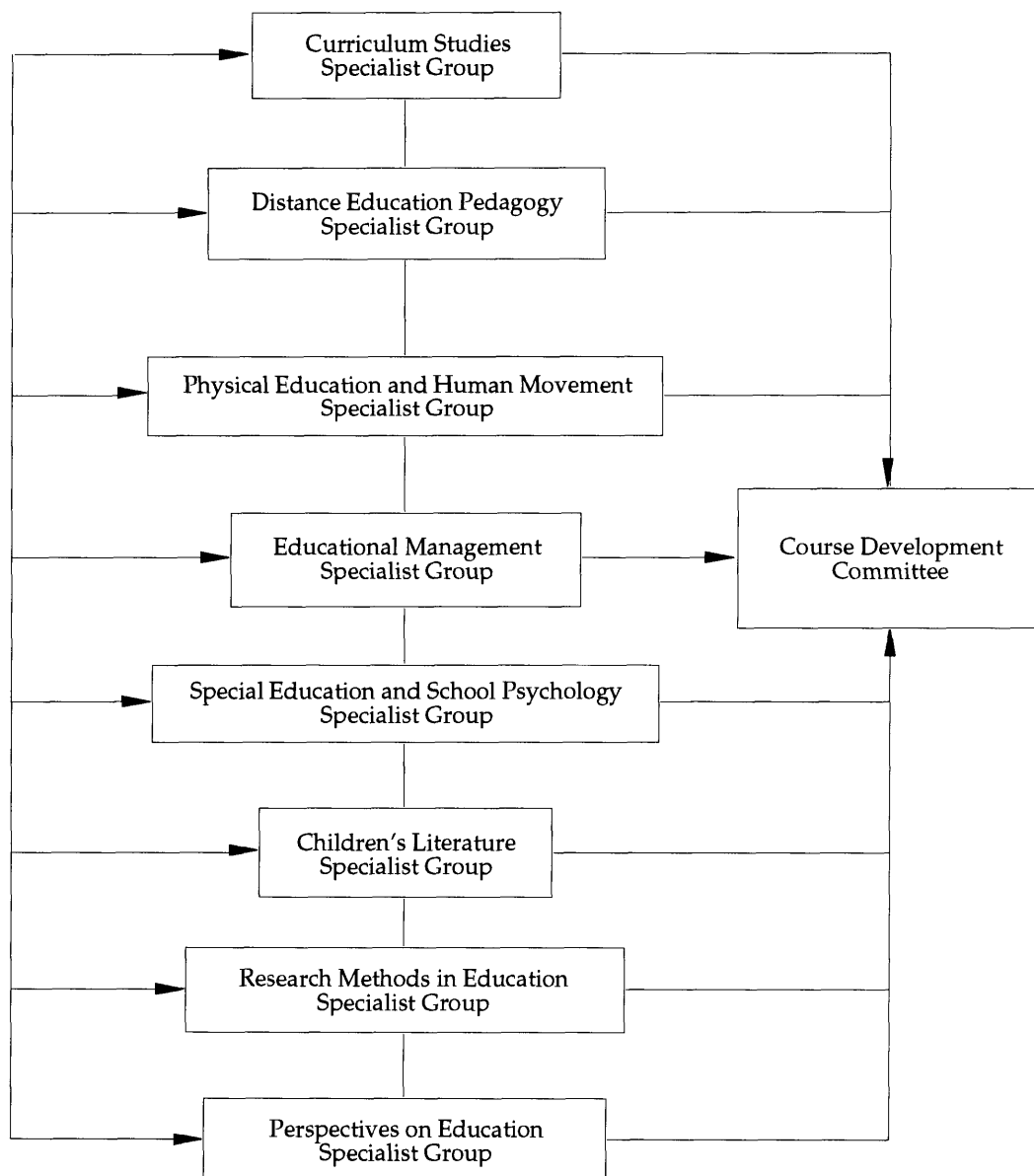


Figure 6
Relationships between Eight Specialist Groups
in the Development of the
Master of Education

The relationship illustrated above is parallel in the sense that the eight specialist groups functioned to develop the content of the specialisations to be included in the proposed Master of Education.

The statements made on pp.342-44 about the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the administrative units require some further comment. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that within a formal framework of hierarchical relationships, the academic administrators acted for the most part with autonomy. This conclusion is based on the examination of administrative arrangements undertaken in both this and the preceding chapter. The course development committees, in particular, acted with a relatively high degree of autonomy. These committees were free from the influence of central authorities, such as Deans or Boards. This statement is especially applicable in the case of the course development committee for the proposed Master of Education. This committee functioned as a cohesive, self-contained group. No formal influence was exerted by the Dean and, apart from the few academic staff who were members of specialist groups, there was no participation in the decision-making process by members of the wider staff community.

The above statement about autonomy requires some qualification with reference to the course development committee for the proposed Master of Arts. It is probably correct to say that the committee for the development of the Master of Arts functioned in a semi-autonomous way. It will be recalled that the Dean, acting on the basis of his formal authority, was responsible for policy decisions which shaped the development of the proposed Master of Arts in the initial stages.

A second observation can be made that is related to the previous points about autonomy. The various course development committees and specialist groups appear to have made decisions that were generally acceptable. As has already been indicated, the centralised unit responsible for monitoring the development of courses, namely the School Board, required little or no changes in any of the course submissions, even though it was not unusual for School Boards to require major revisions. Similarly, with reference to the proposed Master of Education, the decisions made by the course development committee were acceptable to the wider staff community. On those occasions when the chairman of the Education course development committee provided information to the wider staff community, there were no criticisms or suggestions for change. The

decisions of the committee were seen as acceptable. It seems that, in the case of the development of the Master of Education, the academic staff accepted the need for the introduction of higher degrees and were willing to leave the development work in the hands of those who were perceived to be appropriate to the task.

The points made here about autonomous behaviour may not seem particularly remarkable. Nevertheless, they acquire some significance if it is remembered that a highly centralised mode of decision-making was widely perceived as characterising both the institution as a whole and the academic sub-cultures within it. Thus the autonomy with which, for example, the Education course development committee functioned, acquires heightened significance when seen against such a background.

It should be noted that Figures 2-4 (on pp.343-44) do not include reference to the School Assembly (a meeting of the whole staff in a particular sub-culture). The Assembly was not identified as an administrative unit in its own right in any of the development processes. When a School Assembly was involved (as it was in the case of the Master of Education), it was solely a recipient of information about the proposed course. The chairman of the course development committee, for example, provided to the Assembly short progress reports, which he called "Updates" (e.g., *Masters Update*, Number One, 11 August 1989) on the development of the Master's course. The Assembly itself, however, was not a participant in the decision-making process. In the Education sub-culture, the Assembly was a part of the wider communication process and its effect tended to be pervasive rather than narrow and directional.

Conclusion

The picture of the administrative arrangements provided in this and the previous chapter has had three main components: the administrative units, the functions of these units, and the relationships between the units. In this chapter, the functions of administrative units other than the course development committees, have been considered. These units have included the specialist groups (Information Technology and Education); the Dean of Arts; the Dean of Information Technology; the Associate Dean (Academic), Information Technology; two Heads of Programme - the Acting Head of the Bachelor of Education Programme and the Head of the Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children Programme; and the School Boards. In addition, the formal relationships existing between the administrative units were examined.

There were several similarities noted in the functioning of the specialist groups. In the development of both the Master of Information Technology and Master of Education, essentially the same types of decisions were made by all the specialist groups. These decisions were about the thematic foci of subject majors and specialisations and about the content of individual units. In this way the specialist groups differed from the course development committees, the latter being concerned with more global course issues. The specialist groups were similar also in that they were, for the most part, characterised by a low degree of formality and a low level of meeting activity.

There was one major difference, however, between the specialist groups used in the development of the Master of Information Technology and those used in the Master of Education. Whilst there was no conflict of any kind experienced by the Education specialist groups, considerable conflict occurred during the development of the Information Systems subject major. A degree of political behaviour was present as 'the commercials' and the 'analyticals' contested the issue of the structure or thematic focus of this subject major. If the functions of all the administrative units involved across the three development processes are taken into account, the setting in

which the most conflict was experienced was undoubtedly the Information Systems specialist group.

This specialist group was also the only administrative unit in which formalised methods of decision-making, namely, voting was used. Indeed there are a number of factors which suggest that there was a degree of volatility about the Information Technology development process that was not present in any of the other development processes. In addition to conflict, for example, there was the 'bubbling up' of small ephemeral groups.

It is also noteworthy that the specialist groups used in the development of the Master of Education course were formed in the final stages of the development process. In contrast, the three specialist groups for the Master of Information Technology were called into existence by the Associate Dean (Academic) after only five meetings of the course development committee. This may have been partly due to the nature of the two courses. The proposed Master of Education was developed as a generic degree having a core of two units and six areas of specialisation, whereas the Master of Information Technology comprised distinct subject majors. Whatever the reason, there was a sense in which the Information Technology specialist groups played a much more prominent role in the development process than did their Education counterparts.

Of the two Deans identified as administrative units, the Dean of Arts was a more significant player than was the Dean of Information Technology. The Dean of Arts was responsible for policy decisions in the initial stages of the development process. In the development of the Master of Information Technology, the Dean exercised his formal authority to resolve the conflict over the issue of the structure of the Information Systems subject major.

The Associate Dean (Academic), Information Technology - the only Associate Dean to be identified as a significant player - acted decisively to introduce the three specialist groups at a comparatively early stage in the development of the Master of Information Technology. He was also responsible for the appointment of the leaders of the specialist groups. Most importantly, however, the recommendations of the three specialist groups

were made directly to the Associate Dean (Academic), not, as in the other two cases, to the course development committee.

Only in the development of the Master of Education were Heads of Programme identified as an administrative unit. The Acting Head of the Bachelor of Education programme and the Head of the Graduate Diploma in Exceptional Children were formed to accomplish a specific task. They were to make recommendations to the course development committee on the areas of specialisation to be included in the proposed Master's course.

In all three development processes, a School Board was identified as a central unit responsible for monitoring the development of the Masters' courses. However, in each of the three processes, the Board accepted the final course submissions without requiring any substantive changes.

The formal relationships between the identified administrative units have also been examined in this chapter. These relationships were principally hierarchical in nature. For example, the relationship between the specialist groups and the course development committees was hierarchical, as was the relationship between the course development committees and the School Boards, and the relationship between the School Boards and Deans. There was only one exception to the existence of hierarchical relationships. The relationships between the specialist groups themselves were parallel relationships. The point was made, however, that within a formal framework of principally hierarchical relationships, the academic administrators actually behaved with a relatively high degree of autonomy. The course development committee in the Education sub-culture, in particular, functioned with a high degree of autonomy.

If the complete picture of the arrangements used by the academic administrators, as described in this and the previous chapter are kept in mind, one point is clear. There were both similarities and differences in the arrangements used across the three development processes. This was so with regard to the administrative units themselves. Whilst there were similarities, the units identified across the three processes were, however, by no means identical. There were, for example, no specialist groups used in

the development of the Master of Arts. The Dean, whilst not being identified as a significant player in the development of the Master of Education, was so identified in the remaining processes. The Associate Dean (Academic) was only identified as a player in his own right in the development of the Master of Information Technology. Moreover, Heads of Programme were identified only in the development of the Master of Education.

The principal differences in the arrangements emerged, however, when the functions of the administrative units were identified. There were some notable differences, for example, between the functions of the three course development committees. Moreover, whilst the formal relationships between the units identified were mainly hierarchical, these same units actually functioned with varying degrees of autonomy. Thus the complete description of the administrative arrangements used has disclosed a picture which, far from being monochromatic, is filled with chiaroscuro. If the writer were to use one word to encapsulate the nature of each of the development processes, she would use the term 'perfunctory' to describe the development of the Master of Arts, the term 'volatile' to describe the development of the Master of Information Technology, and the term 'thorough' to describe the Master of Education development process.

With the description of the administrative arrangements complete, it remains to examine the relationships between the metaphors used and these same arrangements. This is the final task of this thesis and it is to this task that the writer now turns.