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FEATURES

REGULAR ITEMS

Editorial

Last April I asked for considered opinions about the Green Paper. I did not get any. Was it off-putting to ask for considered *opinions? Or were most of you involved in writing so many submissions to the Minister for various professional societies and special interest groups in higher education that, like me, you felt in danger of turning green yourself?*

Well, the Green Paper turned White, and as far as I can see, the dust has not settled yet. There has certainly been plenty of turmoil over everything from the ARC to amalgamations. Again I wonder how HERDSA members are feeling the impact of THAT Paper on their working lives.

I was fortunate to squeeze attendance at the SRHE conference in December 1988 into a trip to spend Christmas with family in the UK. Fortunate in that I saw old friends and acquaintances. But the atmosphere, at least in formal sessions, was not the fairly optimistic and reasonably cheerful one we usually enjoy at HERDSA conferences.

You may remember that the theme of the SRHE conference was "Academic Freedom". I wondered at the time it was announced why the organisers chose that theme. It was extremely unnerving to hear just how real British academics believe the threat to academic freedom is in the United Kingdom, to hear of cases where people assert they have not been encouraged — nor, indeed, allowed — to carry on with research or teaching which was disapproved because it was "different". I can't get into the merits of individual cases; I simply do not feel that I have enough information to judge them. But I did find the tone of discussion at the conference most depressing. And especially so, because our leaders in Australia seem to be intent on following the course set in UK.

There are few people with whom I have discussed the issues seriously who are not happy to be accountable for their work, who are unwilling to be "appraised". But there are many of us who are profoundly concerned that the appraisal techniques be developed in such a way as to produce valid and reliable indicators rather than some which may, as they seem to be doing in the UK, stifle voices of some highly original thinkers. There seems to be a disconcerting combination of ungodly haste and getting nowhere in Australian higher education.

At the same time as I would like to see you identifying some of the problems being created for you and your institutions by initiatives of the White Paper, I would like also to see us recognise some of the assistance it offered to programs we believe to be worthwhile. Our November 1988 issue (thanks to the hard work of guest editor, Vic Beasley) identified some of the lasting benefits of the Equity and Access Program. The White Paper offers opportunities for seeking special funding for initiatives in curriculum development and in staff development. It would be terribly one-eyed of HERDSA to focus solely on the difficulties posed by the present Government's policies.

So, I ask once again for contributions which address the impact of Higher Education: a policy statement *on you, your students, your institutions. I would like to collect these as a special issue to be published in November (deadline 14 August).*

Peggy Nightingale.

SPECIAL ISSUE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Impact of the White Paper

What has happened since *Higher Education: a policy statement* was circulated by J.S. Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training? What real impact has it had? What changes has it precipitated? Let's be fair and balanced in trying to identify benefits as well as problems and in trying to assess where Australian higher education might be heading as we enter the '90s.

Objective reports and subjective reactions are equally welcome. 500 words up to 2500.

If you are interested in submitting material for this special issue, please contact Peggy Nightingale as soon as possible. Copy will be required by **15 August.**

Institutional Responsibilities to Postgraduate Students

Two approaches to assisting postgraduate students are described. Bruce Keepes (Coordinator, M.Ed, Sydney CAE) and Estelle Phillips (Birkbeck College, University of London) explained their institutions' attempts to reduce postgraduate attrition at a joint meeting of HERDSA (NSW) and the Postgraduate Representative Association of the University of New South Wales.

The Sydney CAE Approach

A structured "qualifying year" and a staff development program for supervisors . . .

Most of those who supervise postgraduate theses have never had any formal training in supervision. Many have not even been given a set of expectations for supervision by their institution.

I count myself one of those who is untrained. I did work for an extended period of time on my own doctoral thesis under the supervision of experienced and nationally recognised professors who were actively engaged in educational research. I experienced the long hours of work, and the pain, that accompanies a significant piece of research. I also experienced the frustration of not fully accomplishing what I had set out to do. And I finally did finish that damned thesis and was awarded a doctorate from the university.

Once the doctorate was conferred I discovered that I was instantly "qualified" to supervise masters and doctoral students. While I am not proud of the fact, the first student I supervised never finished his dissertation. I can only take solace in the fact that I was the junior member of the student's two advisors. On the other hand, if I had had more experience and training in supervision, and if I had been given a set of expectations (responsibilities) for a supervisor, the student might have finished.

In Australia there is an alarming percentage of students who, like the first student that I supervised, do not finish their postgraduate research awards. Forty-nine percent of the *postgraduate award holders* (that is, students with excellent academic records) who began their PhD studies in the 1974 to 1976 period had still not completed their degrees in 1981-82. Thirty-two percent were still studying and seventeen percent had dropped out (Dept of Ed. and Youth Affairs, 1983).

What are the main reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate research award? I would suggest four:

1. Lack of an adequate background in research skills
2. Lack of proper planning before beginning the research
3. Inadequate supervision
4. Personal factors

To deal with the fourth reason first, there are many personal factors that cause a student to abandon, or just not complete, a thesis. The following are some common examples.

The job becomes much more interesting and intellectually demanding than the thesis. Alternatively, the student receives a promotion or takes on a new position which requires more of her or his time.

A second common personal problem is with the student's partner and/or family. Study is demanding of time. As an undergraduate, most of the students do not have family responsibilities and can spend as much or as little time on study as they please. Many, if not most, of the postgraduate students have some kind of family responsibilities.

A third common problem is financial, particularly if the student is trying to study full time.

What are the institution's responsibilities in each of the above. Obviously, for the first problem — conflict with demands of employment — the task is to keep the student motivated to finish. This requires the supervisors to meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss her or his progress. Once every three or four weeks is suggested. The meetings need not be long — an hour or so is sufficient if the student has provided copies of the latest written material (chapter, part of a chapter, table, etc) to the supervisors prior to the meeting. One of the main purposes of these meetings is to give the student support and encouragement. The responsibility of the institution is to encourage the supervisors to give this support.

The second problem — family demands and difficulties — can be handled by understanding the pressure which postgraduate study brings on the family of the student, and by talking sympathetically with the student about these pressures and demands. If the partners and/or the family have a cognitive understanding of the situation, then some of the conflicting demands on time can be reduced. The responsibility of the institution is to understand that these conflicts can occur, and to take whatever action they can to support the student.

The third problem — financial — is one where there are a number of solutions: employment as tutors or research assistants, scholarships, funded research projects, loans, etc. The responsibility of institutions and departments is to explore all of the possible sources of funding and make these sources known to students.

Returning now to the first of the reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate award — that is, lack of adequate background in research skills. At Sydney CAE, the Master of Education (By Thesis) program, which is currently only available on a part-time basis, has a "qualifying year". During this year of part-time study, students are enrolled in two course units: *Conducting Educational Research* and *Directed Research*. This qualifying year is designed to give students background and direction to increase the probability of success.

Conducting Educational Research requires attendance for three hours per week. The aim of the course is to provide the student with background knowledge and skills in educational research. The stated objectives of the course are to enable students to

- understand the nature of research as applied to education
- describe the research process
- explore and define research problems
- understand the different approaches and methods used in educational research
- select samples or subjects appropriate for different research methods
- describe mechanisms for data collection characteristic of each method
- understand qualitative and quantitative ways of data analysis
- interpret and present research findings
- evaluate existing research reports on education
- state appropriate formats for a research report
- develop skills in the preparation of research proposals.

"This qualifying year is designed to give students background and direction to increase the probability of success."

The lecturers-in-charge are two Sydney CAE staff members who personally teach most of the sessions. However, in order to expose students to a variety of approaches, frequently a guest lecturer presents all or part of a session. This arrangement sometimes results in a student requesting that a particular guest lecturer become a supervisor for that student.

Not all students are required to complete all sections of *Conducting Educational Reseach*. Students who can demonstrate that they have the necessary background in some or all of the topics are given exemptions and are not expected to attend those classes where the topics are presented. The main objective in requiring students to undertake *Conducting Educational Research* is to ensure that the students have the necessary background in research skills to complete their thesis. It is an institutional responsibility to provide the students with those skills as part of their postgraduate studies.

The second of the main reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate research award was identified as "Lack of proper planning before beginning the research". This is addressed in the second qualifying course: *Directed Research*. The aim of *Directed Research* is identified as helping the students to extend their substantive knowledge in the field of their proposed investigation and assisting them to develop and defend their thesis proposals. The stated objectives are to assist students to

- review the literature in an area of research interests
- identify a significant problem in the area
- design a study to solve the problem
- master appropriate techniques for the collection, collation and analysis of relevant data
- formulate their research proposals
- justify their proposals under conditions of critical scrutiny
- deepen their understanding of an area of research interest.

There is, of course, considerable overlap with the objectives of *Conducting Educational Reseach*. The difference is that in *Directed Research* the topics are directed toward the particular areas of research interests of the student with the ultimate goal of the student producing a research proposal. In *Conducting Educational Research*, the topics are considered from a much wider perspective and are not specifically directed toward the particular study of any one student.

In the first semester of the qualifying year, as part of *Directed Research* the students meet with a lecturer in small groups on a fortnightly basis. The sessions build on the topics being presented in *Conducting Educational Research* but frequently jump ahead because of a particular interest or problem of one of the students. At each of the sessions each of the students presents a brief summary, oral and written, of the present state of her or his research proposal. In the early sessions the ideas of the students tend to be unfocused, and there is much switching of directions. Gradually, with the guidance of the lecturer and the comments and suggestions of the fellow students, the thesis topic for each of the students becomes clear. By the end of the semester each student has a topic and has written five to ten pages which will become the skeleton of the finished proposal. Some students have identified a potential supervisor, but more likely not.

In order to match the students with potential supervisors, the names of the students with brief descriptions of their thesis topics is circulated to staff, with the request that they contact the program coordinator if they would like to be considered as a supervisor for a particular student. Negotiation takes place with the staff to identify a potential supervisor and one or two associate supervisors for each student. If, after the student meets with her or his potential supervisor and associate supervisors, there is agreement, then the assignment is formalised. If not, alternative potential supervisors and associate supervisors are identified. During second semester the students work with their supervisors and associate supervisors to develop their research proposals.

"If the study is thoroughly and properly planned, there is a higher probability that it will be completed successfully."

The requirements for the thesis proposal are set out in some detail (see Note). If the study is thoroughly and properly planned, there is a higher probability that it will be completed successfully. Most of the proposals at Sydney CAE are about 50 to 60 pages. The students are encouraged to write the proposal in such a way that, with minor editorial changes, most of the material can be directly used in the final thesis. This is recommended for two reasons: (a) to reduce the work the student must do by making the proposal serve two functions and (b) to increase the probability that the proposal will be followed. In requiring the development of an extensive thesis proposal the institution is accepting the responsibility for helping the student to complete her or his thesis.

The third of the main reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate research award is inadequate supervision. In the Master of Education Program at Sydney CAE, supervisors must have the following qualifications:

- possess at least a masters degree in education or an apposite discipline

- have an established reputation as a scholar, as evidenced by books, publications in refereed journals or other means generally recognised by scholars in the field
- have an on-going commitment to research and/or development work in education
- have experience as a supervisor of postgraduate students at masters degree level undertaking theses/ dissertations; *and/or*
- have experience as an examiner of postgraduate theses/ dissertations at masters degree level.

Because colleges of advanced education have only recently begun offering masters degrees and most of the staff have not been employed in the university sector, the number of Sydney CAE staff who qualify under the above criteria is rather small.

To provide for staff in-service training in supervision of masters degree students, and to upgrade the experience of staff so that they can qualify as supervisors, the position of associate supervisor was created. Associate supervisors are not required to satisfy all five of the criteria for being a supervisor, and are considered to be involved in in-service training to become a supervisor. Here it could be argued that since the supervisors rarely have formal training in postgraduate supervision, it could be a case of "the blind leading the blind". To decrease the probability of this, a formal set of *Requirements for the Master of Education Supervisors and Associate Supervisors* is provided to each supervisor and associate supervisor. It is hoped that this document clarifies the role of the supervisor vis-a-vis the associate supervisor and the student (see Note). Here, the responsibility of the institution is to provide training for those who are to undertake postgraduate supervision *and* to ensure that the level of supervision is adequate.

The second part of the above institutional responsibility requires some arrangement for a person to oversee and coordinate the postgraduate program. This person would not only ensure that the level of supervision was adequate, but would also have responsibility for the coordination of seminars for staff who are involved in the program.

Each student has a supervisor and one or two associate supervisors. The purpose of the joint supervision is to provide complementary expertise to assist the student. The joint supervision arrangement also reduces the likelihood that the student will be left without a supervisor while the supervising staff member is on leave.

"... institutional responsibility requires some arrangement for a person to oversee and coordinate the postgraduate program."

In places in this paper I have spoken of "increasing the probability" of a student finishing her or his thesis. Dropout rates in postgraduate study in Australian universities typically vary between 25 and 50%. This is an unacceptable "wastage". The overall responsibility of an institution to postgraduate study is to decrease this wastage and to assist more students to be successful while still maintaining standards. This cannot be done in an absolute mode, but institutions can increase the probability that students will finish. As my accountant would say, "That is the bottom line".

Bruce D. Keepes,
Sydney College of Advanced Education.

Note: The Sydney CAE "Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis Proposal" and "Requirements of Master of Education Supervisors/Associate Supervisors" are available from the author.

The Birkbeck College Approach

An induction program, a departmental research tutor, working with a "cohort" of students...

While I know that this meeting is looking at issues relevant to students taking coursework higher degrees as well as research degrees I am confining my comments to problems within the structures of the research degree for reasons that will become obvious. However, I believe that much of what I have to say is equally applicable to the research component that is usually contained within taught higher degrees.

After many years of interviewing research students in the UK, I have come to the conclusion that reasons for non-completion usually have more to do with the context in which the work is undertaken than with any lack of intellectual ability on the part of the postgraduates. So long as recruitment and selection procedures are satisfactory, postgraduate students will continue to be intellectually capable of completing their higher degrees.

It is the responsibility of the educational system to do something about the feelings of isolation suffered by students who feel that nobody is interested in what they are doing. Here are a few suggestions aimed at ameliorating this situation.

Responsibilities of the university or college

The institution should have a real commitment to developing postgraduate students and should ensure that supervisors have a real interest in research.

There is a vital need for supervision to be recognised as an important staff role and to be counted into the time spent on supervisory duties in a similar way to lecturing and attending to the needs of undergraduate students. In other words, supervision should be accounted for in staff planning schedules and budgetted for accordingly, both in terms of staff time and financial costs.

Facilities should be standardised so that all postgraduates have a room, with desk space if possible, available for their use. This would serve as a common room which postgraduates in other faculties and/or departments would be able to use as a location point for contacting people in related but different areas. In fact, anything that might add to a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging to an academic community should be actively encouraged.

Institutions should introduce mechanisms whereby they can satisfy themselves that there is always some joint agreement between students and their supervisors regarding the programme for the first six months. The mechanisms might include the introduction of the role of research tutor into every department.

Induction procedures should be formalised so that all new research students are treated in a similar manner. Induction could include such activities as an introduction to the library and computer facilities. Postgraduates should be shown how to use these facilities and not merely be given a perfunctory look around.

An information leaflet would be useful and should include (basic?) things such as telling students who to go to when in trouble, where to get a thesis bound, etc.

Typically, an induction programme might include a close look at a completed thesis and an introduction to the published literature ending with a typed-up literature survey on a given topic and/or a critique of a published paper. Students should also be encouraged to write a paper on a specific topic early in their research careers and probably as a last part of their induction.

"... reasons for noncompletion usually have more to do with the context than with any lack of intellectual ability ..."

Example of a formal (six month) induction programme

Every new research student is obliged to attend a series of fortnightly (or monthly) meetings. The meetings should be led by a particular member of staff with interest in and responsibility for postgraduate research. Others should be invited to contribute to the group to speak about particular topics and one of these contributors could be a newly completed successful PhD graduate. But it is important that the new students know that there is one identifiable person who heads up the programme.

The meetings should continue over the first six months and cover such topics as what doing a PhD means, the relationship between students and their supervisors, what a thesis looks like, fears and expectations and the importance of working to deadlines.

What such a programme achieves is the raising of awareness, at the very beginning, of the processes involved in undertaking a three-year period of research training. Students may be told about the different stages through which they can expect to pass — enthusiasm, interest in work, transfer of dependence from supervisor to work, frustration, boredom, determination to finish what they have started (Phillips, 1984). This will not protect them from experiencing boredom, frustration and the rest but at least they will be able to recognise what is happening to them when it does happen.

Such a series of meetings enables them to identify others, in a similar situation to themselves and so make them feel part of a community. It introduces them to the common aspects of being a research student, rather than reinforcing the differences between different disciplines and different faculties. Finally, it enables them to choose whether they wish to continue meeting as a group, perhaps without the member of staff, to discuss their progress and their problems as time passes and they become more involved in their work and more comfortable with their new role.

Responsibilities of departments

Departmental guidelines should be given to every new postgraduate after all members of staff have agreed them. These should be rigorously adhered to by all parties. It is also essential to ensure that there is sufficient back-up for the proposed research. This means that equipment and other resources, such as the cooperation of the lab technician for example, should be available as well as access to institutions where this is necessary.

No new student should be accepted without a clearcut research proposal. It may be that an applicant will need some help in preparing this and also some guidance on which aspect of a topic is likely to be looked on favourably by a particular member of staff. Regardless of any prior contact, each applicant should be interviewed by the potential supervisor and another member of the academic staff of the department (possibly the research tutor). It should be departmental policy that each research student and his or her supervisor agree an informal contract between them. This contract would cover such matters as the amount and type of contact that would be acceptable at different times during the course of the work. As needs change over time, so part of the contract should be an agreement to review it at agreed intervals, probably annually. Such a contract would provide a baseline from which to judge whether things are progressing satisfactorily and facilitate discussion if either of the parties were to deviate too far from the agreement.

All postgraduates should be encouraged to write self-reports of their work, ideally twice a year, which supervisors can use as a basis for their reports on the student's progress. The reports could then be used as feedback for the student in a similar way to the annual appraisal interview of commercial and industrial institutions. The formal tutorials would also present an opportunity for the postgraduates to express their view on the progress of the relationship and to reaffirm or renegotiate the verbal contract that they have agreed with their supervisors.

"The most important thing ... is to ensure that postgraduates have a sense of identity — a feeling of belonging to an institution."

Role of the departmental research tutor

This should be agreed and accepted by colleagues (including the head of department). Duties include

- being involved in all applications and acceptances including the interviewing of applicants (either in person or by nominating a second staff member)

- six-monthly monitoring of students' work via supervisors, thereby also monitoring supervisors' work (up to a point)
- preparing guidelines on matters such as upgrading from M.Phil to PhD and monitoring that they are adhered to by being involved in these decisions
- acting as arbiter when interpersonal conflicts occur.

Part-time students

There is considerable need for departments to be more aware of the difficulties experienced by part-time students. These difficulties occur in many areas but in particular time allocation and financing during the period of study are common causes of stress for many part-time students.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of the institution to ensure that nobody is taken on until the Registry is satisfied that the student will not suffer extreme hardship. This means that some standardised form of enquiry into sources of support during the period of study will be necessary.

Part-time students have particular difficulties because most of their life is spent *not* as a student. They need reinforcement of their identity as a student and a supportive framework for their studies. One way of providing these requirements is to recruit, at one time, a cohort of postgraduate students. The cohort meets regularly and works in an area of general interest to all of the members of the group.

Example of a cohort PhD within one department

In this case people select to work in a specific area. For example, organisational change in a department of management or stress at work in a department of industrial psychology. Within the selected area students define their own unique research problem. People select themselves onto the programme because they want to work in the particular problem area and because they want to be part of a group.

The group meets regularly every two weeks (or every month) to talk about what they are doing. The format is that of a workshop or seminar where individuals discuss one (or two) people's progress, problems, thinking, and provide feedback, help, information and comparisons from their own experience. In this way there is a constant sharing and exchange of views and the group becomes a support network where people can telephone each other and meet outside of the formal group as and when they wish to do so.

Early meetings of the cohort would cover the kinds of issues covered by the induction programme already described and later meetings serve to determine whether any member of the cohort needs to be linked to a specific member of staff and so become a more traditional PhD student. The cohort is led by two members of staff with an interest in the chosen problem area and these two people act as supervisors to all members of the group until such time as this is no longer practicable.

It may be that even after all members of the cohort are assigned to individual supervisors, they still wish to meet as a group. It may happen, too, that some will not need individual supervision, but merely remain with the two cohort leaders, perhaps seeing one or the other for a personal tutorial from time to time. The structure and process need to be kept as flexible as possible to accommodate the needs of different cohorts but the format is always the same during the early stages of the life of the group.

This system has been successfully introduced at Birkbeck College in the Department of Occupational Psychology and we now have three cohorts in existence. In this experiment, all of the students are part-time and the cooperation of their employing organisations has been gained prior to their registration. But there is no reason why such a system, which offers a supportive group of like-minded people, should not work equally well with the more traditional PhD student too.

Conclusions

The most important thing that the educational system can do for its postgraduates is to ensure that they have a sense of identity — a feeling of belonging to an institution. They need to be aware of themselves as research students and as part of a group. This entails certain procedures that make demands on them as individuals to perform and conform to deadlines.

Postgraduates have to be constantly reminded that they are not working in isolation and that there are people who are interested in their work and their progress. So long as this is the case they are unlikely to develop a lack of commitment. The belief that they are letting nobody down if they decide not to continue is a primary cause of non-completion.

The structure that the institution can give to students' role is vital to their sense of identity and continuing motivation.

Estelle M. Phillips,
University of London.

Reference

Phillips, E.M. (1984) Learning to do research. *Graduate Management Research*, 2 (1), 6-18.

Student Support Program in Chemical Technology

More evidence of the broad benefits of Commonwealth equity funding is offered by Shirley Wheeler of South Australian Institute of Technology (see also HERDSA News, Nov. 1988).

First year staff at the School of Chemical Technology at the South Australian Institute of Technology have employed Commonwealth Government equity funds to develop some successful support programmes for disadvantaged students.

Students are coming from an increasingly broad range of backgrounds. Differences in areas such as language, motivation, family support, culture, age, financial situation, physical health, and educational background can affect success in studies.

The three main areas of focus have been: publicity materials for potential students, extra tutorial support for first year students, and CAL and video aids for staff.

Publicity materials

A project officer was employed for four months to produce a pilot information kit about the course and the careers that follow from it. In the kit are: ten coloured paper A4 leaflets, a colour map and a summary pamphlet, all with cartoons. Topics covered are based on questions that potential students ask about higher education and include: definitions of key terms, financial costs and support service information. The information was entered onto Apple Mac Microsoft Word, and then professionally reformatted using Pagemaker. The kit is being distributed to secondary schools, libraries, and key information and community group centres. Some information has been translated into other languages.

A detailed outline of a high quality video production has been researched and printed. Filming has begun, but some disappointments in obtaining sponsorship for the video have meant a delay in its completion.

"The three main areas of focus . . . publicity materials . . . , extra tutorial support . . . , CAL and video aids . . ."

Special tutoring

From 1985 to the end of 1987, intermittent funding has allowed several special tutors to be employed. Ideally, the special tutors had worked with disadvantaged students before, had both secondary school and tertiary level teaching experience, and had a solid background in the sciences covered in the course.

Various strategies were employed by the special tutor. Areas of student academic difficulty were identified in specific detail. These included: gaps in secondary school knowledge, bridging secondary school and tertiary work, and difficult course topics.

Five extra tutorials were held each week, as well as individual tutoring on request. Attendance was voluntary but, occasionally, some students with difficulties were strongly encouraged to attend. Positive reinforcement was the main teaching method. The service to students was enhanced by the special tutor's attendance at all lectures and some practical classes. Written materials, such as a detailed study guide and self-assessment worksheets, were designed to encourage problem-solving rather than rote learning. Several videos on laboratory techniques were produced in conjunction with the Institute's Audio Visual Services section.

Student attendance at the extra tutorials was good, and there was a steady demand for individual tutoring. Positive written and verbal feedback from students has highlighted improvements due to the tutor (e.g. a "G" grade to a "C" grade, and increased motivation in a "feeling that someone is on my side"). Students who received the extra personal tuition tended to pass and receive better grades on average than those who didn't. The pass rate for first years was dramatically improved.

"The pass rate for first years was dramatically improved."

CAL and video aids for staff

As well as the videos produced by the special tutor, one first year senior lecturer produced CAL programmes and worked on an interactive video disk project. Replacement teaching of up to 6 hours per week, funded by the equity budget, enabled him to devote time to this labour-intensive work.

Students have responded favourably to the computer programmes, and they seem to especially like the colour and graphics. These CAL programmes are most suited to self-assessment and revision, rather than to new learning. They can act as a powerful reinforcer to classroom work and private study, especially for disadvantaged students.

Spinoffs

Staff in the school have modified courses to adjust to student learning needs: e.g. there is now a bridging component in the first three weeks of the lecture course and staff have sought to improve their teaching methods, for example, by making expectations clearer. A career/motivation workshop at the beginning of third term demonstrated to first year students the range of jobs and salary levels of graduates. Student requests for relevant work experience and industry visits were passed on to the course staff. The need for a well-equipped student resource room/"home base" was identified.

(Continued on page 16)

Meeting the Challenge of Large Classes

Larger classes challenge all teachers, but perhaps teachers of language more than most others. Jane Munro outlines the approach adopted when numbers doubled in first year Japanese at the University of New South Wales.

It has been for a long time the received opinion, almost an article of faith among language teaching professionals, that language cannot be effectively taught in classes of more than 15 people. But between 1987 and 1988, class sizes in first year Japanese at undergraduate level in most Australian universities have doubled. In the case of the University of New South Wales it was an increase from 80 to 160 students.

Staff numbers have not increased much. Where they have increased at all, they have not increased concomitantly with student numbers and if a ratio anywhere near 15:1 existed before, it does not exist now.

The first year program at the University of New South Wales consists of 5 hours of class tuition per week. Three of these are in lecture format and two of them are in tutorial format. The aims of the course are to bring the students to an intermediate level of competence in speaking and listening and to achieve basic fluency in reading and writing Hiragana and Katakana, and 150 Kanji.

It might seem an impossible task, but after half a year we are pleased with the results, and the oral proficiency of students is already ahead of that which I have observed (over 25 years' experience in university and adult education) in other circumstances after a full year of study. Why?

It is possibly because the students are at an age where conceptual abilities and analytical skills are well enough developed to enable them to learn general principles effectively; thus, the lecturer can take advantage of the fact that they are learning Japanese "as a foreign language" and economies of scale can be achieved in the learning process. At the same time, students are still young and flexible enough to take full advantage of the tutorial environment where they are required to use Japanese actively. University students are a selected group according to intelligence and are a fairly consistent group according to learning patterns and their general educational framework. They are highly motivated and well organised.

"Participation is required of the whole group of about 160 students in a large lecture hall..."

Testing has been arranged to provide active continuous assessment and to take into account many aspects of student performance such that a detailed and yet broad assessment can be made. Curriculum content and course planning are carefully controlled to ensure that students, even those with no previous experience of learning a foreign language, are able to maintain their courses of study consistently.

Since the course is a language course, no formal effort is made to cover matters such as "society and culture", or history, or any other specific subjects of study often thought desirable in first year courses in Japanese. However, the lecture times provide opportunities to introduce aspects of Japanese culture, social behaviour, social and political history, and present-day economic and political developments. In addition, students are given a reading list of introductory books on Japan and encouraged to choose from these in their area of interest and read freely.

"... weekly tests constitute a powerful motivator..."

The three hours of lectures are arranged in the following way. The first hour is used by the non-native speaker of Japanese to introduce, using both English and Japanese, the materials for the week. Participation is required of the whole group of about 160 students in a large lecture hall, in practising the new material. Pronunciation problems common to many students are identified and corrected, vocabulary, grammar and syntax are explained systematically, and student questions are sought and answered. The non-native speaker's role is to explicate and mediate between the two languages and the two cultures. Special characteristics of the student group are brought into play. For example, many students come from backgrounds where Chinese language has been a subject of study either in school or at home, and their experience is useful in developing Japanese language skills. Other students from a variety of European backgrounds contribute in other ways, and share different problems and advantages.

The second hour, which follows immediately after the first, is used by the native speaker tutor in Japanese to illustrate the material. Full participation is required of the class, and a variety of communicative exercises are carried out in preparation for the work of the tutorials. From time to time the Japanese tutor is joined by another Japanese colleague to illustrate various conversations and situations.

The third hour is taught by the non-native lecturer, to consolidate the new material and to test the previous week's work. When Japanese script is being studied it is introduced and tested then. Any administrative details are dealt with in this hour. Towards the end of this hour the new material is revised and the students' learning tasks for the week are recapitulated.

The two hours of tutorials are conducted by native speakers of Japanese, trained and experienced in the teaching of Japanese to non-native speakers. Students must speak only Japanese in these tutorials. Where long explanations of problems are needed, these should be referred to the English-speaking lecturer, rather than use precious Japanese-speaking time. The emphasis is on active use of the language, with whatever teaching aids are relevant, such as pictures, objects, audio tapes or video, or any other process which the tutor can use effectively. Whatever the mechanics of it, interaction between tutor and students and students and students, is the key.

Students will have had the opportunity to learn new vocabulary and will understand the new structures in advance and should have spent some time in the language laboratory before the tutorial.

Assessment is based on tutorial performance (20%), regular weekly tests (20%), a final oral interview test (10%), a final listening comprehension (20%), and a final written test (30%). Thus, 40% of the marks depend on the continuous commitment of the student on a weekly basis.

The weekly tests are conducted in lecture session, and include a short listening comprehension and substitution or translation section, as well as script testing. These weekly tests constitute a powerful motivator for those students who are only interested in their marks and would miss as many lectures as possible, cramming at the end of the course. Cramming is useless in language learning, more so than in some other subjects, and those students quickly get out of the habit of cutting corners by the use of these assessed weekly tests. The administrative inconvenience of marking these tests is outweighed by the educational usefulness of them.

The conduct of the final oral interview also presents administrative problems. But it was conducted by testing students in groups of four, with standard questions asked, all of which were closely based on the course material. Three examiners were present. The questioner was one of the native speaker tutors, and another was present to record marks. In addition, the non-native speaker lecturer was present, also recording marks, to ensure that marking was as carefully standardised as possible. Standardisation of assessment of tutorial performance is difficult, and depends for its success on having rather clear guidelines for tutors indicating what is expected.

"... it is possible to attain good standards, using the lecture format as a means of creating economies of scale in the teaching process."

What I believe we have been able to show is that for beginner students attempting Japanese for the first time in a university context, it is possible to attain good standards, using the lecture format as a means of creating economies of scale in the teaching process.

Student numbers decline as the course reaches more advanced stages, and here the need for classes in lecture format may be reduced, but the same principles can apply.

It would be valuable if we could know how other universities addressed the challenge of inflated class sizes in languages — there are no doubt many ways. And next year, no doubt improvements will be possible.

Jane Munro,
University of New South Wales.

REVIEW

Adventures in Thinking. Edith D. Neimark, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1987, 360 pp, ISBN 0-15-501895-7. (HBJ, Locked Bag 16, Marrickville, NSW, 2204.)

Edith Neimark seems to have done a great service to teachers and students alike by writing a lucid, provocative, entertaining and informative book about thinking. This is not a cognitive psychology text, nor a study guide for students, but a comprehensive course to improve the thinking skills of college and university students.

Professor Neimark — a developmental psychologist teaching at Rutgers State University, New Jersey, USA —has published research about adolescent problem solving, reasoning and abstract thinking. However, her course was prompted by the limited thinking skills of her students. Other teachers at American colleges and universities have also found that many students are ill-prepared for tertiary education. Consequently, many American colleges and universities offer students a course in thinking. Such courses are mandatory for students at California State Colleges. Professor Neimark believes that a thinking course would be particularly valuable for prospective teachers, to enable them to cultivate thinking skills in their pupils at all stages in the educational system. American courses on thinking are usually run by one of the departments of philosophy, English or psychology, although they would seem to be more valuable and have more prestige if offered on an interdisciplinary basis.

Professor Neimark defines thinking as a symbolic activity with the goal of understanding. Her approach is realistic as she does not promise any "right" answers to all questions or easy shortcuts to understanding. What she tries to do is to cultivate thoughtful people who are in charge of their own thinking processes, and who always consider alternative solutions to all problems. During her course on thinking, Professor Neimark insists that students keep a journal of their thinking processes so that they become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This journal also allows students to measure their progress during the course.

"Adventures in thinking" is much broader in scope than any other similar book because Professor Neimark covers a wider range of disciplines including psychology, education, philosophy and statistics. She also discusses topics which affect the thinking process, such as: judgement, ethics and emotion. Her specific examples are drawn from the arts, science and daily life, and she stimulates students to bring novel and contemporary material to the classroom. This reinforces her message that thinking skills are desirable for all aspects of life and the contemporary material makes the course more lively than it would otherwise be. The practical applications of thinking are stressed throughout the book, and there is advice about essay writing, study technique and producing a better curriculum vitae.

The first part of the book is a general introduction and orientation to the thinking process. It deals with different levels of thinking, becoming a more effective thinker, attention, encoding of meaning, communication, understanding, detachment, judgement and evaluation. Professor Neimark describes the first chapter as probably the most difficult one for students, and I would agree. The material in Chapter 1 ranges widely and challenges students to discover the deficiencies in their own thinking. This humbling experience should be a great motivator for students to persevere with the remainder of the course! The second part of the book deals with the tools of thought, such as: evaluating assertions and arguments, deduction, induction, model building, hypothesis testing, probability, chance, problem solving, decision making, and creativity. Each chapter has its own summary, and there are thinking exercises to be done in class and between classroom sessions. At the back of the book there is a short appendix on probability, chapter notes, selected answers to the exercises, and a list of references.

I do have a few minor criticisms about the book. I would, for example, like an explanation of the symbols for logical connectives on page 147, but such criticisms pale against the wider achievements of the book.

Although individual students would profit by reading this book on their own and by conscientiously attempting all of the suggested exercises, the greatest rewards must come from interacting with other students and more experienced thinkers. Since the book is designed for such an interactive group, it is not possible for a solitary reviewer to do full justice to the aims of the book. I can say that I enjoyed reading the book and attempting most of the problems and I would certainly like to use the book with a group of students. As I have no formal training in philosophy, I would plan to enlist the help of a colleague from that department when dealing with the philosophical sections of the course.

Many institutions, accustomed to separating disciplines, may find it difficult to timetable a course in thinking for their students. However, in the spirit of the book, there are many possible creative solutions to this problem, *given the will*. I think that those who are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education have the responsibility to press for such courses, and I would unhesitatingly recommend Professor Neimark's book as a suitable text for such a course.

Pauline A. Mahalski,
(formerly) Otago University.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Assessing Students: How Shall We Know Them? (revised edition). Derek Rowntree, Kogan Page, London, 1987, paper (approx. $38), 275 pp, ISBN 1-85091-300-5. (Available from Astam Books, 27B Llewellyn Street, Balmain, NSW, 2041.)

This is the old favourite on assessment — humane and clear — and it remains that. The author admits that he had feedback from persons suggesting neglected topics that could be brought in, but since there was no unanimity, he did not choose to do so. And he asserts that while "the jargon changes: the ideas (and the ideologies) underlying it are all here in this book". True, most of them are. Nevertheless, something must have happened in the area of assessment in ten years that would justify at least a few lines and updating the references. (Like Boud and Lublin's work on self-assessment, for instance.) Excellent as the original publication was (and is), one still can't help wishing the author had not been quite so satisfied with it, for even excellent work can seem dated. This "revised version" really isn't much revised at all, and it's close to false advertising to claim that it is.

Developing Student Autonomy in Learning, (Second Edition). David Boud (ed), Kogan Page, London, 1988, hardback (£19.95), 274 pp, ISBN 1-85091-276-9. (Available from Astam Books, 27B Llewellyn Street, Balmain, NSW, 2041.)

The first edition of this book (1981) has become an important resource in the literature of higher education. It demonstrated that rhetoric about encouraging students to accept responsibility for their own learning can be put into practice and convincingly made the case that the rhetoric should be put into practice. It was, as the editor intended, "a source of information, encouragement and even inspiration" for people who wanted to increase student autonomy but were not sure what was possible or how to go about it.

This second edition is, for all practical purposes, a new book, with eight entirely new chapters and extensive revisions to the original contents. Where the first edition might have seemed a bit idealistic/optimistic, the second edition offers a much more realistic assessment of what is practicable in conventional settings. In addition, there are more examples of innovations and a greater emphasis on research. The book crosses both geographical and discipline boundaries.

Student Approaches to Learning and Studying. John Biggs, Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1987, hard cover, 145 pp, ISBN 0-85563-416-2. (Available from ACER, P.O. Box 210, Hawthorn, 3122, Vic.)

Two instruments are introduced: the Learning Process Questionnaire (LPQ) and the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), the former for use with secondary students and the latter for use with tertiary students. They seek to measure the extent to which individuals typically endorse common approaches to learning tasks. "It is shown that the various scales relate differentially to important qualitative outcomes of learning: structural complexity, affective involvement, and factual reproduction. Further, the effects of the scales on examination performance are

(Continued on page 16)

Conferences

SCED National Conference, with SRHE and Trent Polytechnic
Theme Enterprise in Higher Education
Place Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham
Date 22 — 23 May 1989
Information Dr Colin Fisher, Conference Organiser, Staff Development Service, Trent Polytechnic, Burton Street, Nottingham, NG1 4BU, UK. (0602) 41-8248 (Ext. 2250).

Improving University Teaching
Place Vancouver, British Columbia
Date 12 — 16 June 1989
Information University College, University Boulevard at Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland, 10742, USA.

Eighth International Seminar on Staff and Educational Development
Theme Rethinking College and University Teaching
Place Portoroz, Yugoslavia
Date 26 — 30 June 1989
Information H&E Associates, 12a Church Street, Stiffkey, Near Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, NR 23 1QJ, U.K. (+44) (328) 75 339.

HERDSA 89
Theme Breaking the Mould: an examination of the forces shaping tertiary education
Place University of Adelaide
Date 1 — 4 July 1989
Information Bob Cannon, ACUE, GPO Box 498, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, S.A., 5001. Phone: (08) 228 5771; FAX: (08) 224 0464.

Modern Methodology for Teachers of the Health Sciences
Place U.K.
Date 4 — 12 July 1989
Information BLITHE, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP, UK. (01) 388 7976.

The First Year Experience Fourth Annual Conference of SRHE and the University of South Carolina
Place The University of St Andrews, Scotland
Date 10 — 14 July 1989
Information The Freshman Year Experience Conferences, University 101, University of South Carolina, 1728 College Street, Columbia, South Carolina, 29208, USA.

International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education
Place Robinson College, Cambridge
Date 24 — 27 July 1989
Information H&E Associates, 12a Church Street, Stiffkey, Near Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, NR 23 1QJ, UK. (+44) (328) 75 339.

Pacific Rim Association for Higher Education '89
Theme International Relations, National Policies and Higher Education in the Pacific Region
Place University of California — San Diego
Date 16 — 19 August 1989
Information Donald Williams, College of Education, DQ-12, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 98195, USA. (206) 543 1891.

British Educational Research Association
Place Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Date 30 August — 2 September 1989
Information BERA Conference Office, School of Education, University of Newcastle-upon Tyne, St Thomas' Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK.

Australian Association for Research in Education
Theme Research and the Future Development of Education in Australia
Place University of Adelaide
Date 28 November — 2 December 1989
Information Dr Michael Lawson, School of Education, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA, 5042.

Fifth World Conference on Computers in Education
Place Darling Harbour Convention Centre, Sydney
Date 9 — 13 July 1990
Information WCCE/90, P.O. Box 319, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010. Phone: (+612) 211 5855; FAX: (+612) 281 1208.

ABSTRACTS

HERDSA Abstracts are based on a regular survey of relevant literature. They are intended for use by tertiary teachers, research workers, students, administrators and librarians. The abstracts are classified into the same groups used by the Society for Research into Higher Education in their quarterly publication *Research into higher education abstracts.*

The *Abstracts* attempt a coverage of current English-language publications in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong. Publications describing research, teaching, administration, staff and students in tertiary education are abstracted.

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HERDSA is most grateful to its abstractors and the cooperation of the editors of the journals abstracted. The *Abstracts* are edited by Martin Hayden, Educational Development Services, Lincoln School of Health Sciences, La Trobe University, 625 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia.

A GENERAL

The Green Paper Issue. The Australian Universities Review, 31, 1, 1988.

This number of the periodical is given entirely to the discussion of the Commonwealth Government's Green Paper on higher education in Australia. Articles are presented by Paul Bourke, Dennis Davis, Roger Scott, Tony Grady, Richard Blandy, Dean Ashenden, Russell Matthews, Gerald Burke, Ivan Snook, Anna Yeatman, Jill Blackmore and Jane Kenway, John O'Brien, Gavin Moodie, and Jennifer Acopian, Leo Maglen, and Derek Anderson.

B SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS

Baird, J.R. **Quality: What Should Make Higher Education "Higher"?** Higher Education Research and Development, 7, 2, 1988.

This article addresses what "quality" in education is, and should be. Previous findings are drawn together to consider the notion of quality and conditions for its improvement. It is argued that quality in education relates to development of intellectual independence.

(Modified journal abstract)

Harman, G. **Tertiary Education and Public Policy: Australia's Response to a Changing Environment.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 251-66.

This paper discusses how tertiary education policy is handled at a national level in Australia, and how effective this approach is today in terms of the considerable future problems to be faced. An assessment is made of both policy successes and policy failures over the last two decades, and brief comments are offered about future prospects.

(Journal abstract)

Lysons, A. and Ryder, P. **An Empirical Test of Cameron's Dimensions of Effectiveness: Implications for Australian Tertiary Institutions.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 323-32.

Cameron's (1978, 1986) nine postulated dimensions of effectiveness in US tertiary institutions were tested in an Australian sample. The findings suggest that higher education administrators should exercise caution when extrapolating from Cameron's results at least in the Australian context. Areas for future research are also suggested by cross-cultural comparisons.

(Journal abstract)

Neumann, R. and Lindsay, A. **Research Policy and the Changing Nature of Australia's Universities.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 307-21.

This paper describes the features of university research which have evolved over the last century in Australia. It analyses recent initiatives and recommendations made by government agencies for the redirection and reorganisation of research and suggests some national and institutional implications arising from them. Some unresolved issues associated with the government's foreshadowed policy directions are highlighted.

(Summary)

West, P., Mahon, T. and Zoellner, D. **Creating New Institutions in Australia.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 281-94.

This article examines the creation of three new institutions in Australia in the 1980s. Questions addressed include: why were the institutions established? how unique are they? whose interest do they seem to serve? The institutions concerned are the Western Institute in Melbourne, Chifley College in Sydney, and the University College of the Northern Territory.

(Summary)

C TEACHING AND LEARNING

Bawden, R. **Assessing the Capable Agriculturalist.** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 13, 2, 1988: 92-106.

The background to the role of assessment in the evolution of an experiential programme in agriculture is presented in this paper. The point is made that in such a context, the process of assessment is itself in a dynamic state. The notion of a matrix of competencies is presented, as is a framework for the development and evaluation of assessment procedures themselves.

(Modified journal abstract)

Baxter, E.P. **Turn-taking in Tutorial Group Discussion, under Varying Conditions of Preparation and Leadership.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 295-306.

The effects of variations in preparation and leadership on turn-taking behaviour in problem solving groups were investigated in a field-experimental setting involving 60 final-year teacher trainees. A factorial, randomised longitudinal design was employed, with controls imposed over many of the identifiable extraneous effects. Four groups (n=15) discussed problematic case study material under conditions of varying preparation (prepared vs. unprepared) and leadership (emergent vs. assigned leadership), for eight consecutive weekly sessions of one hour's duration. Both preparation and leadership, as well as the interaction of these variables, influenced turn-taking behaviour.

(Modified journal abstract)

Blundell, L. and Booth, P. **Teaching Innovative Accounting Topics: Student Reaction to a Course in Social Accounting.** Accounting and Finance, 28, 1, 1988: 75-85.

Social accounting is an innovative accounting topic that has attracted considerable attention in the literature. This paper reports on an implementation dilemma encountered in a course on social accounting resulting from a clash between preferred student learning attitudes and those embodied in social accounting. The use of action oriented teaching strategies to counteract this dilemma is identified. The setting is Griffith University.

(Modified journal abstract)

Bruce, R.H. **Enhancing Student Motivation and Learning: Experiences with a Simple Simulation.** Higher Education Research and Development, 7, 2, 1988: 103-09.

This paper examines the author's experiences in an introductory course in international relations with a simple simulation. The objective is to encourage others who have not yet done so to try using a simple simulation. After a brief review of the literature on simulations, it shows how the simulation is an easy and effective way to motivate students, improve social relations among students, and enhance learning.

(Modified journal abstract)

Dunnett, C.W. **Distance Education Economics and Equity.** Programmed Learning and Educational Technology, 25, 3, 1988: 225-30.

This paper provides an overview of the methods, equipment and technologies used in South Australia in the provision of distance education.

(Modified journal abstract)

Feletti, G. Drinan, J., Trent, F. and Maitland, B. **Students' Approaches to Learning and Satisfaction with Problem-Based Curricula for Four Different Professions.** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 13, 2, 1988: 163-76.

This research looked at students' satisfaction with and changes in approach to learning during their first year in problem-based curricula for agriculture, architecture, medicine and paramedicine. While students at each school showed little change in approach apart from achievement orientation in the six-month period after entry to the course, there were different patterns of approach at each school. Correlations between students' approach to learning and degree of satisfaction with their course strongly support earlier claims and research findings on the merits of problem-based curricula, although they still need more careful definition to be useful to curriculum planners.

(Modified journal abstract)

Heath, T. **Communication Skills and Veterinary Education.** Higher Education Research and Development, 7, 2, 1988: 111-17.

Questionnaires were used to assess attitudes of Queensland veterinary students and recent graduates to various aspects of communication. These revealed that students entered the veterinary course with a relatively low appreciation of the importance to a veterinarian of the skills needed to interact effectively with people, but placed high importance on skills for dealing with animals. As the students proceeded from first to fifth year, they became increasingly aware of the relative importance to veterinarians of understanding and communication with people. Formal teaching of communication skills to veterinary students has recently been pioneered at the University of Queensland.

(Modified journal abstract)

Holt, D. and Bonnici, J. **Learning to Manage Through Open Learning: A Case Study in International Collaboration.** Programmed Learning and Educational Technology, 25, 3, 1988: 245-57.

This case study analyses the collaboration between the Open Business School, the Open University (UK) and the School of Management, Deakin University, in offering open learning courses to Australian managers.

(Modified journal abstract)

Hort, L.K. and Hogan, A.E. **Setting Objectives and Assessing Competence in Professional Legal Education.** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 13, 2, 1988: 92-106.

Professional Legal Education in the ACT is undertaken at the Legal Workshop. A problem-based learning orientation is a prominent feature of their programme. In this paper the assessment of the problem-based learning used in the Workshop is described.

(Modified journal abstract)

Jones, J. **Student Grades and Rating of Teaching Quality.** Higher Education Research and Development, 7, 2, 1988: 131-40.

Students enrolled at Auckland University were asked to rate the quality of the teaching they had previously experienced during their first year. About 900 students in four separate entry cohorts were involved, yielding a total of 28 separate ratings. These ratings were correlated with students' examination grades. Between classes, there is an indication that rating of teaching is related to examination performance. Within classes, there is a positive and significant relationship between student grades and their rating of teaching only when teaching is rated above average. The results are discussed.

(Modified journal abstract)

Nightingale, P. **Understanding Processes and Problems in Student Writing.** Studies in Higher Education, 13, 3, 1988: 263-83.

This paper is an attempt to summarise and synthesise some of the materials in the rapidly expanding literature on the development of language skills and the relationship of language to learning. The focus is on written language. The aim is to encourage enlightened discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of student writing and of what should be happening in institutions of higher education to develop sophisticated written communication skills.

(Modified journal abstract)

Prosser, M. **Is Prior Knowledge of Subject Matter More Important to the Development and Use of Meaningful Learning Skills?** Programmed Learning and Technology, 24, 4, 1987: 280-85.

In this paper the influence of prior subject-matter knowledge on the useful application of meaningful learning strategies is questioned. The results of a study of the interaction between prior subject-matter knowledge and learning strategies as they affect student achievement are then reported. The implications of the results for the planning and implementation of study skills programmes are discussed.

(Modified journal abstract)

Trigwell, K. **The Crib Card Examination System.** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 12, 1, 1987: 56-65.

The crib card examination system has features in common with conventional, open-book and take-home examinations, and appears to combine many of the advantageous features of each of these systems. This paper presents the findings of preliminary studies of some of the characteristics of crib card examinations.

(Modified journal abstract)

Webb, G. **Using Spreadsheet Software as an Aid in the Administration of Marks and Grades.** Programmed Learning and Educational Technology, 24, 2, 1987: 151-55.

In this paper the use of spreadsheet software in the routine administration of marks and grades is considered.

(Modified journal abstract)

D INFORMATION NETWORKS

E STUDENTS GENERAL

Evan, C. **Social Issues in Medicine: A Follow-up Comparison of Senior-year Medical Students' Attitudes with Contemporaries in Non-medical Faculties.** Medical Education, 22, 5, 1988: 375-80.

A comparison of first-year medical students' attitudes to social issues in medicine with attitudes of non-medical first-year students in 1983 found that the medical group was less conservative towards general social issues but more conservative in relation to those areas which closely affect the doctor's role, particularly the place of allied health professions and government intervention in health care. This paper reports a follow-up study of the same group of students when they had reached senior years in their respective courses. While medical student conservatism on general social issues continues to be no greater than among other student groups, there is a marked increase in conservatism of attitudes towards government involvement in health care and regulation of costs.

(Modified journal abstract)

Le Claire, K.A. **Higher Education Choice in Australia: Processes and Impediments.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 333-49.

This article outlines and interprets the results of a pilot study designed to evaluate the impact of various social and personal factors on the decision process stages (DPS) through which years 7-12 high school students proceed in choosing to undertake study in the university sector of higher education in Australia. The article also examines the associated effects of background factors influencing participation in higher education generally.

(Modified journal abstract)

Le Claire, K.A. **Higher Education Access and Participation: Political Dependency and Student Choice.** International Journal of Educational Research, 12, 4, 1988: 375-93.

The two-fold purpose of this article is: (a) to review Australian trends concerning retention rates to the final year of high school, transition rates to higher education, and the phenomena underlying these rates including the impact of political intervention; and (b) to outline a pilot study conducted to identify and describe the dynamics of the decision process stages through which high school students proceed in choosing to undertake university study and conjoint levels of (un)certainty.

(Modified journal abstract)

Wright, C.M. **Student Participation in Nursing Programs: a Study of their Social Composition Since the Transfer to Colleges of Advanced Education in New South Wales.** Higher Education Research and Development, 7, 2, 1988: 153-62.

This paper compares the social origins of 400 nursing students in hospital-based and 448 nursing students in college-based programs in New South Wales. Using a specially constructed composite socioeconomic variable for comparison, the preliminary analysis suggests that a middle class bias, presumed to exist by some in the selection of recruits to hospital-based programs, does not operate in the selection of college recruits. The soundly equitable college recruitment pattern is more marked for females than for males.

F STUDENTS' SELECTION AND PERFORMANCE

Farley, A.A. and Ramsey, A.L. **Student Performance in First Year Tertiary Accounting Courses and Its Relationship to Secondary Accounting Education.** Accounting and Finance, 28, 1, 1988: 29-44.

This Australian study develops a model of student performance which incorporates variables for academic ability, previous accounting knowledge, and mathematics background. The model allows for interactions between some of these variables. Results are tested using a multiple regression form of extended ANCOVA. The hypothesis that performance in first-year accounting is independent of secondary accounting education is rejected at high levels of significance for all four years studied.

(Modified journal abstract)

G STUDENTS: CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT

H STAFF

Allen, N. **Aspects of Promotion Procedures in Australian Universities.** Higher Education, 17, 3, 1988: 267-80.

This paper describes formal procedures for the promotion of academics in Australian universities within the general context of economic constraints and increasing pressures on promotion to higher categories. A comparison is made of formal promotion procedures before the passing of recent federal legislation on equal opportunity in employment. Although there are differences in detail, procedures for promotion to senior lecturer and reader/associate professor reveal a very high level of consensus on what constitutes rewardable academic performance. Nevertheless, promotion opportunities for academic staff are of necessity becoming more restricted.

(Modified journal abstract)

Andreson, L.W. and Powell, J.P. **Competent Teaching and its Appraisal.** Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 12, 1, 1987: 66-72.

In order to judge the competence of an individual as a teacher it is necessary to establish the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that constitute competence. It is argued that this is composed of three major elements: preparation for teaching, the engagement in teaching, and professional development as a teacher. The constituents of each component are then listed. The paper concludes by suggesting sources of evidence and urging the need for more attention to be given to the documentation of achievements related to teaching.

(Modified journal abstract)

Rosen, B. **Tenure and Academic Freedom in Australian Education.** Unicorn, 14, 3, 1988: 152-54.

This paper examines some of the arguments for and against tenure and changes to the terms of academic employment. It is concluded that a policy statement establishing realistic guidelines in the matter is required. An Australia-wide committee of academics and other interested parties should meet to set these guidelines, which should be acceptable to the great majority of academics.

(Summary)

43206 - 43209

I CONTINUING EDUCATION

Philps, R., **The Continuing Education of Teacher Educators.** Unicorn, 14, 3, 1988: 147-51.

This paper examines a number of issues relating to the continuing education of teacher educators. Of particular interest is the question of whether or not there is a focal point about which teacher educators might shape their continuing education in a manner likely to enhance their teaching, their links with their profession and their research skills and output. The benefits and feasibility of academics returning to school classrooms at regular intervals are discussed.

(Summary)

ABSTRACTORS:

Hugh Guthrie, TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, South Australia.
Martin Hayden, Lincoln School of Health Sciences, La Trobe University.

(From page 8)

The equity funding has now ceased, and it is hoped that the Institute will continue to support the successful programmes engendered by such funding. Other schools within the Institute have expressed a desire for similar programmes as a means of improving student success.

Shirley Wheeler,
South Australian Institute of Technology.

Note

Further information can be obtained from: Shirley Wheeler, for publicity materials; Sue Dawe, for special tutoring; Mike Page, for CAL and video aids for staff; John Devenport, for bridging course.

Address for correspondence: The School of Chemical Technology, South Australian Institute of Technology, The Levels Campus, P.O. Box 1, Ingle Farm, S.A. 5098.

(From page 11)

modified by personality characteristics, and by the congruence between motives and strategies. This evidence implicates a form of metacognition in student learning here called *metalearning:* the awareness of students of their own learning processes and their increasing control over them . . ."

Research and Development in Colleges of Advanced Education in Australia. Warren Jones and John Ainley, Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1987, paper, 111 pp, ISBN 0-86431-014-5, $14.95. (Available from ACER, P.O. Box 210, Hawthorn, 3122, Vic.)

Report of a study commissioned by the now-defunct Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission with the main aim of providing an indication of the current level, role, and purposes of research and development in Colleges of Advanced Education in Australia. Terms of reference also included: identification of sources of funding, description of ways CAEs collaborate with other institutions, indication of how R&D is managed, supported and encouraged, and description of the perceived role of R&D in both the teaching process and growth of the institution. "The picture which emerges is of a greater range and extent of research and development than has been formally acknowledged, but with those activities being mainly supported by a variety of sources outside of the higher education system."

Exercises in Teaching Communication. Stewart Marshall and Noel Williams, Kogan Page, London, 1986, paper, 157 pp, ISBN 1-85091-055-3. (Available from Astam Books, 27B Llewellyn Street, Balmain, NSW, 2041.)

A handbook which provides teachers of communications courses with materials structured around approximately 40 exercises. The authors claim that the exercises are suitable for use in schools as well as with science, engineering and business students in further and higher education. Topics covered include: study skills, written presentation, oral presentation, interpersonal communication, interviewing, group communication, and theory of communication. Some exercises oversimplify complex skills, but others may give discipline-based teachers some ideas about relatively simple ways to teach communications skills. The problem is that communication skills aren't simple . . .

Deadlines for future issues:

Deadlines for future issues:	**July issue:**	**14th May**
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