

Review of undergraduate education: initial consultation with students

One of the key objectives of Victoria University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2010-2014 is to 'establish a distinctive vision for education and the student experience at Victoria'.

To further this objective, the University is conducting a review of undergraduate education, with the aim of further improving its undergraduate programmes and the students' learning experiences, as well as ensuring they compare favourably internationally.

You are invited to comment on the following areas. Questions are provided under each subject area to help you think about the issues.

Thank you for your time.

Research-led teaching

Research-led teaching is among the distinctive features of universities as educational institutions. All University lecturers are required to conduct research as well as teach—and the in-depth knowledge gained from their research enhances their teaching. You are invited to comment on ways Victoria can further enrich the learning experiences of students through their immersion in the research intensive environment of Victoria. Below are questions you may wish to consider.

- How can Victoria best build on its strong research environment to the benefit of its undergraduate students?
- Should there be an assessed research project in the final year of all undergraduate programmes? How could undergraduate research skills best be assessed at earlier stages of their study?
- Should all undergraduate programmes or majors offer compulsory courses in the final year of study, which require reflection upon disciplinary methodologies and research questions?

Balancing degrees between specialist disciplinary or professional focus and broader general education

You are invited to comment on any aspect of the above issue, but in particular to give a response to any of the following questions:

- What should be the basis for a definition of a broad general education (for example, values, content knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual challenge)?
- Should we structure our undergraduate programmes to allow or else to require some breadth studies (i.e. courses outside students' core structured programme?)
- Should the responsibility for ensuring breadth lie with students (through their choice of electives) or with those designing the academic programmes?

Introducing key curriculum threads

Several review projects elsewhere have resulted in the introduction of shared 'curriculum threads', areas of common focus across all undergraduate degrees. These may centre upon a particular set of issues or problems (such as climate change), or be designed to develop some particular set of skills and perspectives (commonly, some version of 'advanced academic

literacy' or perhaps ethical practices), or may be quite specific, such as a requirement for all students to learn a language other than English. You are invited to comment on any aspect of this issue, but in particular to give a response to any of the following questions:

- Should there be common areas of focus across all undergraduate degrees? Should they be included in curriculum content, or added as specific courses?
- What might Victoria's curriculum threads be? Should they be centred upon our graduate attributes (communication, critical and creative thinking, and leadership)? Should they reflect the University's Treaty of Waitangi commitments?

Encouraging deeper student learning

The nature and frequency of assessment, as well as the feedback to students generated by it, can play a key role in determining the depth of student engagement. You are invited to comment on any aspect of this issue, but in particular to give a response to any of the following questions:

- Should the University make more use of formative assessment to assist student learning (i.e. assessment tasks designed to help student learning) as opposed to emphasising summative assessment (i.e. testing after a period of work)?
- Should the University ensure that all programmes provide students with a balance of assessment tasks and approaches (e.g. formative and summative; group work and individual work; oral and written tasks)?
- Is there a place for student self-assessment or peer assessment?

Providing opportunities to broaden study

Co-curricular experiences such as internships, placements, leadership programmes and volunteering, as well as exchange and study abroad programmes, can complement formal learning and also provide a means of disciplinary community engagement. Students can be provided with an opportunity to apply and test their skills in a 'real world' setting, and may increase their future employability as well as contributing to their communities. You are invited to provide ideas for improving existing programmes such as VicPlus and the Victoria International Leadership Programme, as well as suggest new opportunities.

How to make your submission

Submissions from individuals or groups are welcome. You can make your contribution by emailing Jude.Brown@vuw.ac.nz or sending a written submission to Jude Brown, Executive Officer to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Room 207 Hunter Building. Submissions close on 25 May 2011.