REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED
TO REVIEW THE FACULTY OF ARTS
AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SAMOA

2014
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PART A. GENERAL

A.1 The Review Panel

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A.2 Community Representatives

Naea Beth Onesome-Tuilaepa, CEO, Samoa Public Service Commission

Doreen Tuala, ACEO, Samoan Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture

A.3 Acknowledgements

The 2014 panel established to review the Faculty of Arts at the National University of Samoa wish to begin by acknowledging and thanking the leaders, staff and students for their openness and willingness to meet and talk frankly. The in-depth self-review from the staff showed a great deal of critical reflection about their own work and programmes, and was of great help to us in our deliberations. We also acknowledge those stakeholders that made time to speak with us and provide insights into the ways the NUS staff and students engage with the communities the university serves. Finally, to those who supported us during our visit in all manner of practical ways, from ferrying us to and from the hotel, to supplying a succession of tremendous meals, to ensuring the piles of paperwork were copied and available, our sincere thanks and appreciation for your hard work and unstinting generosity.
A.4 Terms of Reference

The first three objectives of the National University of Samoa’s Programme Review Policy (2013 edition, page 1, section 3) constitute the broad remit of the panel conducting the 2014 Review of the National University of Samoa’s Faculty of Arts, which is to:

- honestly assess the quality of the programmes
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes
- obtain feedback from lecturers, graduates and other stakeholders

The specific criteria defining the scope and nature of the review panel’s report, and requiring comments and recommendations, are detailed on page 5, section 10 of the ‘Programme Review Policy’, which asks the reviewers to focus on topics from the following list, as relevant:

- student and staff issues;
- programme relevance; course content;
- skills development;
- assessment suitability;
- strategies and relation to objectives;
- suitability of competencies;
- teaching practice and relevance of technology;
- transition and staircasing issues to and from programmes;
- health and safety;
- research;
- proposed new courses or programmes.

While Section 1 of the Programme Review Policy explains that reviews of this kind constitute one of the quality assurance means by which ‘the University seeks to ensure quality programmes, delivery and environment’, the assessment criteria outlined under Section 10 make no specific reference to the physical, emotional, or intellectual learning environment within which staff and students work and interact. While we have assumed that the requirement to consider aspects of the learning environment is implicit in the topics list, the panel considers it would also be helpful for focusing feedback if it appeared as a topic in its own right.

Recommendation A.1
That ‘learning environment’ be added as a topic for report in Section 10 of the Programme Review Policy.
A.5 The Review Process

The panel spent three days together at the NUS meeting with staff (teaching and administrative), students, and stakeholders. Added to this the panel was provided with a range of materials prior to arrival at the NUS – including the self-review documentation; university Calendar; and review policy.

During the three days of the review further documentation was sought and provided, including examination scripts, strategic plans, financial reports, and an earlier FoA review document.

The 2014 panel had access to the substantial 2005 review report of the panel chaired by Professor Cluny Macpherson, and this report has informed our deliberations. Our report makes no attempt to revisit issues that have been satisfactorily addressed as a result of the 2005 report, but focuses instead on issues that still require addressing or have arisen more recently due to changes in pedagogical methods, research opportunities, and cultural and technological changes.

Recommendation A.2

For future reviews it would be useful if the review team had available, before arriving on campus, a broader set of strategic documents and financial reports of the university in which to locate their conversations with staff, students and stakeholders.

A.6 Commendations, Constraints and Resourcing

In the opinion of the panel, the National University of Samoa offers a compelling example of how a committed and passionate group of educators and support staff can achieve international quality outcomes (both in research and teaching) in the face of constraints and uncertain times. It is evident to the panel that the learning environment at the NUS is severely pressured by a scarcity of both physical and staffing resources, as well as sharing with universities throughout the world a period of unprecedented change in tertiary education.

We commend the NUS leadership and staff for their passion for students and for their commitment to linking the teaching and learning carried out within the Faculty of Arts to the needs of the students, families and communities, and for Samoa. FoA academic staff hold high expectations of their students and where they will go next; they want them to find good jobs in Samoa and the region, and for some to receive training which will set them in good stead to succeed at other universities. This clearly is heard by students who were enthusiastic about taking their place as ‘global and Samoan citizens’ and held high aspirations for where they would go after the NUS.
Having assessed the programmes and courses we must congratulate the staff and students on the overall quality of the academic result. Based upon the assignments and exam scripts viewed, and the conversations with past and present students, we saw strong evidence that many of the students are working at a level commensurable with those studying in world-ranked universities from the region. Added to this the FoA Foundation programme facilitates the crucial transition for high school students wishing to embark upon tertiary study, with strong training for students attaining degrees at the NUS or overseas.

With regard to the teaching and learning environment, the commitment of the NUS management and staff to professional development of teaching skills is admirable.

We are concerned, however, that the strong teaching and learning outcomes are being achieved through placing increased demands on staff, in an environment that is highly regulated, under resourced, and one offering less career security than at most universities. We recognise that many of the elements that have led to this situation are beyond the full control of the nation’s leaders, let alone the leaders of the NUS and the FoA itself. Like many island nations, Samoa finds its economy and cultural fabric challenged by geographical separation, changing global economic circumstances, migration, and the cost of keeping pace with rapidly changing technologies. However, we also believe that identifying some of the key challenges and developing strategies to mitigate their effects will see the NUS retain the quality of its programmes, while ensuring its staff and students remain passionate and committed to the institution.

A.7 Teaching and Learning

The majority of students we heard from were highly complimentary of the personal dimension of their learning experiences, praising teachers for giving remedial teaching and labs, for teaching in both Samoan and English, for being enthusiastic about what they are doing in the classrooms, for encouraging students to think positively, and, for giving them time to challenge and ask questions. The NUS was described as a great university for part-time students with one stay-at-home mother finding a supportive environment and an open door when she returned to study.

Students spoke in glowing terms about staff: ‘the lectures are really helpful’; ‘they understood my family, work, and study clash’; ‘I wanted to give up but they supported me through’; ‘because my teachers are bilingual they can help to explain concepts’; ‘the staff are really committed’; ‘the knowledge is really relevant and I can apply it’; ‘the teachers are good mentors’; ‘they challenge us’; ‘they push us out into the world’.

Less positive were comments made about the rote learning approaches used in some courses, with the observation that while such a method is used broadly in the Samoan school system, these ‘fact and content’ driven approaches don’t translate well into the university environment where a stronger focus on ‘how to learn’ is required. The panel believes that rote learning will not produce NUS graduates whose abilities will match with
critical thinking and problem solving skills sought by the main employers of NUS graduates (often the Samoan public service). Neither does it equip students who plan to go to higher studies in universities in the region and beyond. This issue is primarily dealt with in the individual programme and course recommendations.

Another concern raised by staff and students was the lack of infrastructure, ICT, and administrative support to help with teaching and learning. The advances in online learning, online student management systems (Learn, Moodle etc), and new forms of pedagogical technology are impacting on universities internationally and cannot be ignored at the NUS.

There is a caution, however. If any of these measures are adopted, then during the period of transition as the NUS moves towards an online learning management system or similar, the institution and staff will need to be mindful of the level of access to ITC technologies that students have. For some students, the lack of access to the internet in their homes and communities means continued need to provide access to materials in other forms, for example the provision of hard copies of materials, the use of noticeboards on campus and so on. In our meeting with students, some spoke ambivalently of a lecturer who was making an effort to be digitally forward-looking by posting course material on Facebook, but was making no provision of physical resources for students with limited internet access.

Recommendation A.3
Set up an eLearning team of both academics and IT staff so that there is strong academic input into IT decision making.

Recommendation A.4
Seek support to install an online learning management system as soon as possible, and ensure staff are trained to use it effectively and appropriately.

A.7(i) Student Evaluations
There was genuine commitment by staff to improving the teaching-learning nexus, however, the panel noted the lack of teaching feedback. The vital area of student feedback around course design, learning outcomes and teaching competence has been neglected, meaning that up to date student responses to various teachers and courses are not readily available.

Recommendation A.5
That a structured system of regular student evaluation of courses and teachers be allocated more resource and that weight be given to student feedback in both course design and to aid academic staff in the ongoing development of their courses and teaching skills.
A.7(ii) Work Integrated Learning

The curriculum for each of the FoA programmes will be dealt with in turn at the end of the general review comments, however, an overall issue with regard to curriculum is that of work-integrated learning.

The destination for many NUS Arts graduates according to staff, students, and stakeholders is the Samoan public sector. Questions were raised about whether the skills learnt within the FoA were ‘relevant’, a question which faces Arts faculties internationally. There is a need to ensure that the transferable ‘critical thinking, writing, and research’ skills that students acquire in the NUS FoA are recognized by both graduates and employers. By and large the required skills outlined by stakeholders are being met by the FoA teaching and assessment approach, however, a number of additional approaches may help to address identified skills gaps. Consideration should be given to work integrated learning, applied research projects, and a focus on types of writing for business and public policy in assessment processes.

Recommendation A.6
That the FoA senior staff meet with a range of stakeholders to discuss the introduction of new modes of teaching and assessment to equip students for public sector employment.

A.7(iii) The Foundation Programme

The Foundation programme is a vital capstone to secondary education and a valuable preparation for tertiary study, which also brings in around 60% of the university's income. For all these reasons this vital transition year cannot be taken for granted or under resourced. While the Panel wants to congratulate staff for successful programme delivery, we note some issues that were raised by staff and stakeholders (including those from other parts of the university).

The size and nature of the Foundation teaching creates some unique issues. Teaching as many as 900 students, and dealing with extremely large enrolments in courses like HEN4, means that capacity can be stretched to breaking. Added to this the resourcing challenges already noted, including staffing issues which will be discussed in detail later (workloads, development leave, job uncertainty, qualification level) place strain on the Foundation programme. Adding to the strains within the Foundation programme were issues around the management of student information, the slow responses from administration for information like class lists, and the lack of physical and study support resources for this unique cohort of students.

Recommendation A.7
That the administrative support structures for the Foundation Programme be reviewed and systems introduced to ensure prompt and accurate administrative information is available to academic staff.
A.7(iv) Foundation Courses and the Relationship with the Faculty of Education

The Dean of the Faculty of Education, in a frank discussion about the challenges facing the Faculty of Education, noted that the Foundation courses offered by the Faculty of Arts are of profound importance to the preparedness of his entering students. However, he questioned whether the Foundation courses are entirely focused on what pre-service teachers require, noting that most require the basics of the English language, rather than insights into writing from the challenging end of the English canon. Teachers need to be able to educate a class in simple, straightforward and understandable English.

Recommendation A.8

That the University leadership, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education work closely to assess whether the Foundation programme as it exists meets the specific needs of the cohort of students likely to enter the College of Education. In particular, we recommend exploring and if necessary resourcing such strategies as a basic ‘English for Teachers’ course, or the implementation of a pre-Foundation programme offering literacy, numeracy and science that leads less able students into Foundation and success.

A.7(v) Relationship between FoA and the Centre for Samoan Studies

It was evident to the panel that the result of recommendations from the last FoA review to separate the faculty and Centre for Samoan Studies has created unintended consequences. It now seems that there are competing interests between the FoA’s Department of English and Foreign Language, and Department of Social Sciences—teaching literature, history, political science, geography, sociology and anthropology—on one hand and the Centre for Samoan Studies teaching of history, culture, language, anthropology and archaeology on the other. Where this has the most impact is with regard to enrolments in CSS courses.

Recommendation A.9

The rules surrounding completions of minors be reviewed in order to make it easier for students to take both a major in either Arts or Samoan Studies, and a minor in the other.

A.8 The Physical Environment and ICT Infrastructure

Time and again the panel heard from staff and students about the physical needs of the campus and the vital role such features as a new library, more study space and better purpose-built classrooms would play in ensuring quality learning outcomes. The positive, from the panel’s point of view, was hearing the Facilities Manager, Andrea Sua, articulate a strong and clear vision for the NUS. This was underpinned by a coherent and coordinated campus master plan, which begins by collecting baseline information, filling in gaps in historical data, and then by developing robust projections of future needs and priorities.
With so much to do on campus, we appreciate that the Facilities Manager office must focus on the most immediate and time-critical needs such as the auxiliary building for core services, the cultural centre, the undergraduate research facility, the official land transfer for the new library and student services, with a view to developing schematic plans in order to seek urgent donor funding.

We were pleased that among the many important projects being considered, plans are underway for a much larger library, which will go a long way to alleviating some of the physical space problems outlined by both staff and students. However, we also have a strong caution. Investing substantial sums in the physical infrastructure of a new library will still fail to bring the NUS up to current international best practice with regard to information resources unless there are similar or perhaps even greater levels of investment in ICT infrastructure and teaching technologies. Around the world universities are moving rapidly to focus on digitized collections, eBooks, and online journals/databases. Additional resources are needed to assist in using multiple methods of information presentation. Students themselves commented on the need for alternative ways of getting material and understanding what they were studying. Some noted they learnt better using audiovisual materials and yet these are not readily available at the NUS. Others were still using the SchoolNET resource provided in their local school in order to gain access to online materials.

Currently the NUS has relatively ancient computers for its staff, limited computing resources for students, slow and erratic access to the internet, expensive wireless access, and very few useful digital resources for study and teaching. While acknowledging fully the difficulties Samoa faces with regards to distance and infrastructure, and the fact that only the Government can bring more fibre to Western Samoa, we believe strongly that for the NUS to be a competitive international university the key is investment in ICT access and resources, which break down distance and democratize knowledge. Staff and students need fast, free internet access on campus with access to the latest learning technologies and digital resources. This will support not only teaching and learning at the NUS, but also the goal to have staff engaging in more research. As a starting point the NUS must ensure greater consistency of IT services, speed, reliability and support across campuses. It was suggested that minimum download speeds and service levels, and an accountable campus person be confirmed.

**Recommendation A.10**
The campus master plan responds to the need for student services outlined below. As part of this, a physical space should be added to the campus master plan in which the Foundation programme can develop a centre for resourcing, student advice and tutoring.

**Recommendation A.11**
The NUS ensures that the Campus Master plan has sufficient flexibility to respond urgently to requirements brought about by changes to information technology.
Recommendation A.12
We recommend that the Vice-Chancellor urgently convene a committee of international IT experts from major universities and technology companies who will be able to advise on the best technologies and software products for this purpose, and on ways in which international funding and technical support might be obtained. Review panel members are happy to suggest people or organisations worth approaching.

Recommendation A.13
The NUS should continue to seek international aid and support to upgrade IT infrastructure, broadband and wireless connectivity on campus, to supply new computers to staff, and to supply inexpensive tablet computers to all students free or at cost.

A.9 Students

As was noted above, students spoke generally in very glowing terms about their time at the NUS. Where there were issues raised by students, many centred on a variety of factors detrimentally affecting the learning environment, often related to the considerable physical resource constraints identified above. These physical space constraints meant a lack of seating and study space, minimal library resources, poor internet access, and over-crowded classrooms. Some students also complained about a lack of more basic facilities, citing instances of no paper in toilets and soap dispensers left unfilled. It is hoped the recommendations above if implemented will go some way to resolving issues raised.

As well as the physical environment, other concerns raised by students were the uneven support services for learning (particularly with regard to core study skills for new students), careers advice and counseling.

With regard to student engagement in the institution, the panel also received a strong sense that some processes at the university were opaque to students, including little understanding of the role or purpose of the Students Association.

With the above issues in mind we believe greater investment by the NUS in pastoral and academic support will return dividends in the form of student commitment to successful learning, and we have the following comments and recommendations to make in relation to student support services. Each of these will be discussed in turn.
A.9(i) Counseling Support
Some students noted discomfort that in the past the NUS has had a single male counselor available to support the student body. For a university the size of the NUS a single counselor is not sufficient to fully support students, nor is a counselor of only one sex appropriate when it comes to supporting students who might have need of advice about deeply personal issues that they would rather not confide to a member of the opposite sex.

Recommendation A.14
We understand that the appointment of a second counselor is underway; we applaud this and note that the counseling team should always consist of, at minimum, both a male and female counselor.

A.9(ii) Student Learning Support
Based on student and staff feedback, student learning support services across the university would benefit from a review and reorganisation of the services delivered. In line with common practice at other universities, it seems appropriate that any changes in this area take place within the context of the establishment of a dedicated Centre for Student Learning Support run by qualified staff and charged with providing support for students in such critical skills of learning as written and oral communications, critical thinking skills, referencing and assessment. Such a centre might also oversee some intensive seminars during orientation week offering guidance in practical skills such as essay writing, time management, referencing, and note taking.

As part of the Centre for Student Learning Support, consideration might be given to providing time and resources for a staff member to set up and run a peer assisted study scheme. Such a scheme would not replace formal tutoring, but would be another way to ensure students are getting the guidance and support needed. In particular, there is an opportunity to develop a peer-mentoring scheme for Foundation students, with experienced and successful students supporting younger students in return for which their mentoring role is recognized by a certificate of participation or an entry on a co-curricular transcript. Such schemes can only be run if a staff member is allocated the time to oversee the programme, train the facilitators of the peer sessions and so on.

Recommendation A.15
That student learning support services be reviewed with a view to establishing a dedicated Centre for Student Learning Support run by qualified staff and charged with providing support for students of the type described above.
A.9(iii) Teaching Styles and Support
The panel believes that rote learning will produce NUS graduates whose abilities will not match what is sought by the main employers of NUS graduates, namely critical thinking and problem solving skills. As will be discussed in the staffing section of this review, changes to this approach require a collective commitment to staff mentoring, professional development, and hiring of additional teaching staff.

Recommendation A.16
That a Learning and Teaching or Curriculum Review Committee (which would be a sub-committee of Senate) look at the overall assessment and curriculum approach at the NUS to ensure that all areas are focusing on ‘critical thinking and problem solving skills’.

A.9(iv) Careers Advice
A common issue facing many Arts Students is being uncertain about the sort of employment their degree is likely to offer. Many do not recognize that in this digital age of globalisation and instantaneous communication in which modes of work are rapidly changing, the transferable skills of critical reading, archival and textual research, various modes of analysis, and the ability to communicate complex messages are of considerable value. A careers advice centre assisting students to successfully find employment would ensure that the NUS sends its graduates into the world fully equipped to demonstrate the value of the NUS degree.

Recommendation A.17
That a Careers Advice programme be developed to support graduates entering the workforce.

A.9(v) Relationships with the Students Association
Few students we spoke to had much awareness of the Students Association or of student politics. They seemed unaware that their association fee was something they might have input into the use of, and very unaware of how student politics worked. Nor was there a class representative system where students could report to a representative who could work for change via the students’ association. Some thought the association fee was primarily to fund social events and were surprised to learn that the sum raised might be targeted to helping provide better learning services. The panel believes that awareness would be raised significantly by the establishment of a student newspaper, affiliated to the Students Association but with editorial independence and a mandate to comment on student politics and university affairs. Such a periodical need not be large nor necessarily frequent, and would logically be supported by the Faculty of Arts and even used as a vehicle to give experience to students interested in entering a profession such as journalism.

Recommendation A.18
That the NUS encourage and support the Students Association to improve communication with students and increase involvement in student politics by establishing a student newspaper and by instituting a system of class representatives to coordinate student feedback to university leadership.
A.10 Staff

One of the largest challenges the Faculty faces is the varied depth of knowledge because of the education levels of staff, with some programmes having a significant number of staff with only a BA and no research experience. This is not a reflection on the individual staff, but rather reflects the structural issues which make it difficult for the NUS to attract and retain staff with PhDs (for example, the wages and lengths of any likely appointment are not comparable with internationally competitive universities). This has an impact upon the way courses are taught, and the ability to design assessments and curricula. In many cases this results in content-driven courses, without a lot of time for critical reflection by staff and students.

Added to this the staffing profile means there are very real issues around the mentoring and guidance provided to staff at all levels. There is an induction process for new staff, overseen by the Dean, and mentoring and professional development is a key part of the strategic plan, with generous subsidies to get higher qualifications. However, more attention could be paid to ongoing processes of mentoring and support.

The panel recognises that the lack of senior staff in some areas of the FoA makes it difficult to provide the right mentoring, support, and guidance for a team both with regard to curriculum design and execution, and the development of research agendas. There was concern that mid-career staff are often taking on the entire burden of mentoring and professional development for all staff. As such we recommend that more support be given to senior staff to mentor junior colleagues on a one-to-one basis. We also believe that our colleagues at the NUS should not think of themselves as isolated departments, but as part of a larger network of Pacific scholars and academics capable of collaboration and support. Where appropriate we would encourage the development of relationships with scholars from other universities who might support and advise FoA academics and assist with mentoring and curriculum design. We believe that at our own universities such relationships would be regarded as important service and we would be happy to consult on the development of such relationships.

Recommendation A.19
That the development of documented mentoring plans for junior and mid-level staff members be prioritized. Given that a large number of staff are graduates with first degrees, it is particularly recommended the Dean and departmental heads work with staff to develop career pathways which recognize fully the importance of post-graduate qualifications, research opportunities and publications, and professional development.

Recommendation A.20
That the FoA identify areas in which mentoring at a senior level is required and consider approaching experts in the discipline from Australia, New Zealand and the USP who might support and advise the NUS staff and departments. Panel members are happy to consult and advise on the development of productive relationships with appropriate people.
A.10(i) Security of Employment
The fact that every staff member is on a three-year fixed-term contract is problematic and a number of staff cited the lack of job security as one of the reasons why attracting and retaining staff of a high calibre can be extremely difficult. The panel understands that this is a common employment model linked to the Samoan public service, but we also believe that some steps towards increased job security would encourage staff to plan teaching and research further into the future.

Recommendation A.21
That the NUS explore with the government models for increasing the employment terms of academics. As a first step the focus be on increasing to five years the employment contracts of senior leaders such as the Vice Chancellor and Professors and Programme Heads (even if these are not professors).

A.10(ii) Workload
The panel heard numerous concerns about heavy workload, but we also heard some staff members who complained of excessive student numbers conceding that they were admitting students from other tutorials into their classes. Management also expressed concern that policies around workload aren’t always read, asked about or implemented. In making recommendations to management about improving lines of communication and setting up working groups to look at new strategies for building a pool of relievers and the like, we recognise that this is a two-sided process and faculty must ensure they are meeting their obligations.

Recommendation A.22
That the Dean ensures all policies to manage workload are understood and implemented, and that academics are taking advantage of the policies to control their working conditions as far as they are able, avoiding such practices as allowing students to move out of assigned classes and float between teachers.

A.10(iii) Sustainable Staffing
The panel is concerned that many of the pressures on the NUS detailed above act against the consolidation of the staffing complement—discouraging people from committing to the institution long term. There appeared to be some feeling among senior academics that if too much pressure is put onto the younger staff early in their careers they are likely to ‘give up’ and leave. The flow-on effect of this is that the NUS risks burning out some of its mid-career academics because of the workload and mentoring responsibilities they are undertaking.

Recommendation A.23
That the NUS leaders and academics cooperate in a working group to determine ways to retain young staff without burning out people further on in their careers. This may involve such strategies as developing a larger and more reliable pool of relieving staff, or reaching out to other universities in the region to identify academics with the time and flexibility to be able to support the NUS in times of acute need.
A.10(iv) Professional Development
The opportunity for staff to improve their qualifications at overseas institutions is of major importance to incrementally improving the overall qualifications of the NUS faculty. The trade-off is that for the time these staff are absent from their posts, their courses are either covered by colleagues or fixed term staff with less knowledge, or else are not offered. It is not clear to the panel how the competing imperatives of upskilling the academic workforce and delivering quality teaching in the meantime can be easily managed. We can only reiterate some of the recommendations above, for example, that working groups be established to look closely at the issues and explore ways of expanding the pool of quality relievers and acquiring international support. We are reluctant to recommend delaying or staggering professional development opportunities, but concede that the NUS needs to be able to deliver quality programmes.

A.10(v) Staffing Levels
In response to questions concerning these issues, management advised that the Vice-Chancellor has never denied a request for additional staff as needed, and it is always a major disappointment to discover that staff haven’t been asked for. The complicating factor here is the issue identified above, that the pool of available staff is extremely small and recruiting a considerable challenge, and building a pool of skilled staff will take considerable effort and thought, with no simple solutions.

A.11 University Objectives
The university documentation and discussions with the VC and senior leaders demonstrate a clear objective to be an internationally competitive university. This has informed many of the recommendations seen in the review so far, however its importance to the institution warrants further discussion. As has been noted already there are barriers to the aspiration goals, some of which cannot be overcome in the short-term. What can be done in the near future is for the NUS to further define the basis for ‘international competitiveness’.

As the World Wide Web gives university education an increasingly global reach, with many large universities offering a cornucopia of free open-access courses, smaller and regional universities have recognized that opportunities exist for excellence in identifying and capitalizing on strategic areas where there is comparative advantage. In the opinion of the panel the NUS’s great comparative advantage are the islands and people of Samoa, and its location in the Pacific. Samoan people have made contributions to world literature, culture, education, sport and the like, of much greater importance than the nation’s population would warrant. The Samoan language, culture, and knowledge (traditional and contemporary) are a treasured heritage, to be preserved, strengthened and taken to the world. This distinctiveness was described by some staff and stakeholders as the crucial place ‘Samoaness’ plays in the NUS environment and beyond.
Staff contributions to what makes the NUS both distinct and internationally competitive—its focus on Samoaness—comes in many forms. There is research and teaching needed on the relocated settlements across the Pacific and the plethora of opportunities to study motivations for Samoans settling outside the nation. There is significant space for research and teaching on the deep past but also from the encounters with the West over the last five hundred years. In Sociology, there is space for genealogical and oral history work around migration and resettlement (past and present) as Samoa and Tonga merit study as the birthing ground of Polynesia. Of direct relevance to the NUS research ethos and priorities are debates about integration of customary and modern authority systems; and ongoing work into the history and current practices of the land tenure system. These are a few of the opportunities for the NUS to ensure its international distinctiveness and competitiveness at the same time.

What must also be acknowledged is that such an approach has a danger of duplication of purpose between the university as a whole and the Centre of Samoan Studies. It is important to consider how to ensure differentiation. The difference could be one of direction or emphasis from the general to the particular, or perhaps one of the levels of teaching—a focus on undergraduate teaching at one level and postgraduate studies at another.

The panel feels the strategic direction and importance of ‘Samoaness’ in teaching and research, is an ongoing conversation for staff at the NUS, not a debate that can be settled by an outside panel. In particular there is the need to balance the learning of things Samoan and ‘international competitiveness’. Staff must continue to have opportunities to discuss whether what is needed is a separate course in Samoan studies or whether Samoan society, culture and language is covered.

**Recommendation A.24**
That in strategic planning all staff are given adequate opportunity to explore and share the many ways they contribute to creating a distinct, and therefore, global university.

**Recommendation A.25**
The Vice Chancellor continue to work with staff on the overlap in the overall university mission (particularly with regarding the humanities and social sciences) and that of the CSS.
A.11(i) Policy and Leadership

The strong drive for international competitiveness is behind some of the policy approaches being taken by the current VC and leadership team. In an institution with as many resource constraints and issues as currently faced by the NUS it is perhaps remarkable that there is not greater tension between academics and managers around scarce resources, teaching conditions and the like. That said, academic staff have reported in various forums that they find certain policies are heavy-handed and disempowering, with management seen as adversarial rather than facilitating around such issues. We were told of eight staff who experienced demoralising pay cuts when their contracts were re-negotiated because of insufficient publication, but who felt their extenuating circumstances such as editorial delays, excessive workloads above their contractual obligations, and insufficient research infrastructure at the NUS were not taken into account.

Recommendation A.26

That policies and strategic plans focus even more closely on creating a collegial and enabling environment, where the constraints upon the NUS researchers are recognized, both by greater mentoring support around research and by rights of appeal (possibly to an independent assessor) when research targets are not reached within a contracted period.

A.12 Communication Inside and Outside the NUS

Effective communication between management, staff and students is a challenge in any large institution. We commend the Vice Chancellor for holding a staff forum every semester and sending around emails to all staff on important issues. However, there still appears to be scope for more effective communication at all levels, from managers to faculties, faculties to departments, and departments to students, particularly around who owns the decisions and the exact challenges facing the university.

Recommendation A.27

That a process to reiterate and clarify lines of communication and decision-making responsibilities between administration and faculty, and staff and students be instituted; this process would establish clear, widely promoted channels of communication so that staff and students know exactly who to go to for what issue.

A.12(i) The NUS Web Presence

With regard to the international presence of the NUS, one issue could be dealt with immediately and that is the university’s web presence. All members of the panel found that the NUS web site was difficult to negotiate, much information was lacking or difficult to find, and web links often went to empty or incomplete pages. As the NUS’s front window to the world, this creates an impression of an organization in functional disarray.
**Recommendation A.28**
The NUS web presence requires substantial work generally. For the purposes of this review the FoA should prioritize the posting of accurate and up to date information on the web site. The Registrar, who is responsible for content, should oversee the plan for this, and markers of success.
PART B. DEPARTMENTS

B.1 English and Foreign Languages Department

We would like to thank the staff of the English and Foreign Languages Department for their extremely detailed and helpful pre-review report. As the faculty’s largest department, delivering courses to students from all five faculties, EFL plays a vital role in ensuring that the students who represent the future of Samoa are well equipped with the vital tools of language, literacy, communication and critical thinking. The Department’s mission is three-pronged, as reflected in its programmes in English, Linguistics and Foreign Languages. First, the Department’s mission to develop competencies in oral and written English, the second official language of Samoa, is taken seriously and produces not just a large cohort of competent English users, but a small number of impressive English literature majors, as capable as their peers in universities where English is the first language. A second mission of the Department promotes a deeper understanding of the structure and use of language and in doing so, provides students with important transferrable skills in data analysis and problem solving. Third, through its programmes in Japanese and Chinese, the Department seeks to produce students with communication and cultural skills that will enable them to engage successfully in these globally important cultures.

B.1(i) English Foundation Offerings

The Department plays a vital role in student development through its offerings in foundation and bridging courses. However, with English as a compulsory comparator course, the demand for Foundation English and the English bridging courses places considerable strain on the programme. This is due in part to maintaining small group teaching, which is a vital element of the learning model. However, tutorial sizes can blow out with an optimum 15 students per tutorial sometimes being almost double that. Management willingness to provide additional staff is complicated by the significant time-lag in facilitating the appointment of part-time staff, meaning that some staff have found other work by the time their appointments are confirmed.

Recommendation B.1 (EFL)

That processes are put in place to ensure that there is no delay in appointing required fixed-term and part-time staff for the beginning of each semester.

B.1(ii) English Literature

English Literature courses seek to balance the value of being as local and regional as possible with a desire also to be global and international. There is deliberate attention paid to materials that teachers will need to know. This includes a strong segment of canonical English literature, nicely balanced with attention to World Literatures Written in English, and a valuable focus on postcolonial writing and thought, along with popular offerings like children’s literature and drama. We have no suggestions to make for changing the courses as we see them as meeting both local needs and international expectations. Given that
students majoring in English Literature are doing so in a second language, the quality of the work is very high and expectations are demanding.

However, we note the challenge surrounding the cutting of courses that do not reach enrolment targets. This inevitably limits the ability of a small department to offer a complex and developed English major. One means of addressing the issue of low enrolment courses would be to combine some courses into a generic paper (e.g. Great Works, Literary Genres etc.). Several modules could be offered in the course which could give students a sense of the range of possible options for study, and also funnel some of them from smaller courses into a single, larger stream. The advantage of this approach is that it encourages team teaching and gives students a range of positive experiences, including exposure to literature that they might otherwise not have studied.

With regards to resourcing, English staff have noted that the severe lack of books and limited access to other resources leads to very limited critical thinking and an increase in plagiarism. This is simply because students have few sources available to help them develop complex arguments about their topics. Inevitably where a few sources are widely shared, work from those sources has a greater potential to be shared also.

As a final point, it is a matter of regret that due to scarce resources and low enrolments the NUS cannot currently offer a dedicated Pasifika Literature stream, particularly as this could have the potential to be packaged for international delivery when a sufficiently robust digital platform has been established.

**Recommendation B.2 (English)**

Staff explore possibilities for amalgamating certain low enrolment literature papers into larger, team-taught, modular papers.

**Recommendation B.3 (English)**

When funding and technology permits the English staff also explore the possibility of offering collaborative courses in Pasifika Literature in English to students at other universities.

**B.1(iii) Linguistics**

The Linguistics programme is comprised of 7 currently offered courses, as well as one (HEN 106) that has been not offered lately due to low enrolments. The programme offers a rich and comprehensive selection of courses which gives students broad exposure to the fields of study, as well as opportunities to examine certain topics in-depth, e.g. syntax, semantics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics. The undergraduate students that the review panel met with had high praise for the instructors, commenting on their dedication and availability.
An important issue facing the programme concerns the low enrolments in upper-level courses. Part of the reason for this may be related to a lack of transparency regarding the usefulness of studying linguistics, a not uncommon issue faced by linguistics programmes. Students may wonder what they can do with a degree in linguistics. The technical nature of the subject matter may also scare some students, particularly those in entry-level courses. Another challenge seems to be that unless the course satisfies a requirement, students are not likely to take it, or if there is a clash, they will opt to take the required course. All of these are very real and important issues.

**Recommendation B.4 (Linguistics)**

REPACKAGE COURSES FOR CORE MARKETS. One strategy for dealing with the issues noted above is to identify core markets and offer courses that are suitable to these “customers”; that is, cater to the needs of the current or future work force. Similar to the Japanese course relating to tourism, there may be specific needs that the courses in linguistics would satisfy. One example would be individuals interested in learning or teaching languages. Were this the audience, at least some of the course offerings could be repackaged in a way to frame linguistic knowledge so that it specifically appeals to those students.

**Recommendation B.5 (Linguistics)**

UPDATE COURSE NAMES. The names of some of the courses could be made more transparent and appealing. Linguists know what psycholinguistics is but undergraduate students probably do not and the opaqueness may turn some students away. An alternative might be a name like Language and the Mind, and instead of Sociolinguistics, perhaps The Interaction of Language and Society, and rather than Syntax and Semantics, maybe Meaning and Structure in Language.

**Recommendation B.6 (Linguistics)**

INFORM ABOUT TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS. In course outlines and throughout the semester, it may be useful to focus on the graduate profile of the student and the transferrable skills that students are learning in the course. For higher-level courses, in particular, these would include skills relating to critical thinking and problem solving, skills that are crucial to many jobs and careers.

**Recommendation B.7 (Linguistics)**

EMPHASISE PRACTICALITY. Explore how to contextualize the study of language and linguistics more, and in doing so de-emphasize the abstract, technical aspects. The focus instead would be on the practical and functional aspects of language. Showing a student that the reason she cannot hear the difference between ‘th’ and ‘d’ is because the sounds are not contrastive in her language and thus affects her perception, may be useful for the student trying to learn or teach a language that has those phonemes. Or, it may involve placing more emphasis on writing sentences and understanding why certain common errors occur.
This could be done for HEN 102 with perhaps the greatest effect, given that it is an entry-level course. The course covers an impressive amount of material in the semester with relevant topics such as language and society, and language and education covered. The students are also introduced to a considerable amount of technical and theoretical linguistic information and tools. Experience from other universities suggests that undergraduate students often find the technical and abstract nature of linguistics quite challenging and do not always appreciate its value. Consequently, unless the course is required at a particular university, enrolments can be low. Emphasising the practical rather than theoretical aspects of the material may then be beneficial (though clearly theory also underlies the practical side!).

One way to approach this would be to focus on how the acquired knowledge can make them better at learning or teaching languages, for example. One might introduce concepts in phonology, for example, by comparing the sound systems of English and Samoan (a pair of sounds that are allophones in one but contrastive in another), and how the differences may lead to errors in pronunciation. This is similar to aspects of HEN 106, where the goal of the course was explicitly to comparative the languages in a range of respects. Since that course is not currently being offered, perhaps some of the material could be incorporated into HEN 102. De-emphasizing the theoretical and technical aspects would also seem to differentiate it more from HEN 202 where these currently seems to be overlap. The suggestion then is to focus more on the practical language side (as is being done successfully with HEN 107), with less explicit emphasis on theoretical linguistics; it may help students to see more directly how what they are learning can have a direct application to how they use language, and hopefully attract more students into the higher level courses in Linguistics.

B.1(iv) Chinese and Japanese Languages
Two foreign languages, Japanese and Chinese, are currently offered on a regular basis. During the review we had the opportunity to review information about enrolment, instructors’ profiles and course descriptions. In addition, we spoke to instructors as well as students taking courses in the Japanese programme; none of the students in the group were studying Chinese. The students, who study out of interest and for career reasons, were enthusiastic about having the opportunity to learn the Japanese language and about other cultures more generally. They also spoke highly of the instructor. We also had the opportunity to visit rooms used for language teaching.

The EFL Department and Japanese programme are to be commended on the development of the course on Japanese for Tourism. The course clearly addresses a need and provides students with valuable information that they will be able to use in their future careers.

With regards to staffing, there is one staff member charged with teaching courses and overseeing each programme. The NUS is fortunate to include among its staff the first Samoan to teach Japanese. In addition to the NUS teaching, the Japanese instructor also offers community-based courses and is involved in promoting Japanese through activities
outside the classroom, e.g. Japanese Speech Competition. The Chinese instructor, funded in part by the Chinese Embassy, organized a Chinese poster display to promote the study of Chinese though seems to be less engaged in activities outside the classroom.

The sustainability of the two programmes in their current form emerged as a key issue when talking to staff. This is particularly the case regarding advanced Chinese and the Japanese language courses. While the programmes receive some funding from the Japanese and Chinese governments, support is less than it has been in the past, at least for Japanese. Nonetheless, funding from the Chinese and Japanese governments is crucial to sustaining the course offerings.

Sustainability naturally also relates to enrolment numbers. While Japanese for Tourism boasts relatively strong numbers, the Japanese language courses have few students. Over the past 5 years, there have been about 15 students on average per year in the entry-level Chinese course, yet the numbers have not translated into enrolments at more advanced levels. The higher enrolment figures for Elementary Chinese and Japanese for Tourism indicate that there is indeed interest among the student body for the languages. However, as the Tourism course strongly suggests, students seem to be especially interested in learning the language when they can see a practical connection between the course material and future job prospects. It would appear that a transparent connection is lacking in the case of the more advanced Chinese courses and the other Japanese courses; this may be one reason for the low numbers.

**Recommendation B.8 (Foreign Languages)**
That the Department explore the possibility of repackaging the Chinese courses with a target audience in mind. This will necessarily require market research on the needs of students and industry. It may also be beneficial to reach out to the Chinese community as a means of attracting heritage speakers to the programme. There may be less of a need to change the Japanese offerings given that the Tourism course already exists. Making more students aware of the courses (e.g. through brief presentations to Foundation courses?) and the relevance of the subject to their areas of interest may be useful.

If was evident during the Review that there are insufficient resources for language teaching and learning. For students to successfully acquire another language, they need to be able to regularly listen to and imitate native speech, beyond what they are exposed to in the classroom. There are a variety of methods available for making appropriate resources available, e.g. on-line providers, discs, etc. While there is an adequately sized room in the Department that seems to have once served as a language lab, computer or audio equipment is either broken or lacking. Were this room to be equipped, it could be a vibrant learning hub for students and staff alike.

**Recommendation B.9 (Foreign Languages)**
That the language lab be sufficiently equipped with language teaching and learning equipment.
A further issue raised during the Review concerns the need for the EFL Department to pay for the Chinese instructor’s accommodation. While the Chinese Embassy hires and pays for the lecturer, the funds covering rent come out of the Department’s budget. Due to dramatically escalating rents in Apia, the expense used up almost half of the Department’s operating budget in this fiscal year. With so many other areas of need in the Department, such an arrangement has the potential to create resentment among staff, even though staff value the lecturer in Chinese. This situation needs to be remedied immediately.

**Recommendation B.10 (Foreign Languages)**
That funding of the accommodation for the lecturer in Chinese be covered centrally, perhaps through a request for greater support from the Chinese government, so that the EFL operational budget can be wholly allocated to supporting teaching and learning activities.
B.2 Geography

B.2(i) Achievements since 2005 External Review
An important recommendation resulting from the 2005 review was to develop and offer a major in the discipline of geography. At the time, five courses were offered and the reviewers recommended developing three new courses with a focus on human geography rather than physical geography, because the costs of courses in human geography were perceived to be lower. Since 2005 two new courses (HG300—Geography of Tourism in a Globalizing World and HG301—Environmental Geography) and a major in geography has been established. Although the specific recommendations of three new human geography courses were not achieved, the two new courses (HG300 and HG301) are excellent choices given the needs of the region. The Department is to be commended for these achievements since the 2005 review.

B.2(ii) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) at the NUS
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are rapidly becoming the de-facto tool in the discipline of geography. The use of GIS and other geospatial technologies (e.g. Global Positioning Systems (GPS)) have applications in both human and physical geography. Currently the NUS does not teach GIS but according to Dr. Taimai, Head of Department of Environmental Science, the Faculty of Science (FOS) is developing the capacity to do so. It is important that students coming through the geography programme at the NUS have the opportunity to learn and develop skills with GIS and other geospatial technologies.

Recommendation B.11 (Geography)
The Department Head in Geography assure continued collaboration with the FOS in the development of curricula using GIS, and that access to the teaching facilities (i.e. computer labs) and software by students in the Department of Geography be supported by university administration. It should be noted that it is not necessary to purchase expensive software to teach the basics of geospatial science. Two free alternatives are Google Earth (an effective teaching tool if there is good Internet access), and Quantum GIS, which is a free GIS software and does not require Internet access.

B.2(iii) Staff Development
Currently foundation and first year geography courses are taught by junior staff and second and third year courses taught by senior staff. My understanding was that all senior staff may teach any of the upper level courses—in other words, there appears to be little sub-disciplinary specialization. Sub-disciplinary specialization is important because it can improve the quality of teaching and can enhance professional research agendas.

Recommendation B.12 (Geography)
Senior staff determine areas of specialization and divide the teaching of courses according to each staff member’s chosen area of specialization. As much as possible teaching responsibilities should be aligned with staff members’ research interests. This will
facilitate developing strong, research-based teaching, and will allow staff members to leverage their teaching responsibilities with their research goals.

Staff at the NUS are encouraged to enhance professional development by working on and obtaining advanced degrees. This is good and will improve teaching at the NUS as staff with higher qualifications have the ability and confidence to develop course materials based on the most current theory and practice in geography. However this also results in challenges to the Department as it is often difficult to find properly trained replacements while staff are away enhancing professional development.

**Recommendation B.13 (Geography)**
I recommend that, when possible, staff leave Samoa for professional development at time periods not coinciding with other staff. While it is understood that the timing of professional development leave is determined largely by the scholarship granting organization, it may be possible, and advisable, to seek a deferment for a year or two from that organization so that multiple NUS staff are not away at the same time. This could be implemented as a matter of policy.

**B.2(iv) Resourcing**
The lack of sufficient number of computers for staff members was raised through the course of interviews at the NUS. While budgets are tight, staff need adequate access to computers and Internet to properly prepare for teaching and carry out research.

**Recommendation B.14 (Geography)**
Each staff member in the department have access to a properly functioning computer. It is common to consider the life-span of a computer to be 3-5 years. Computers older than this are likely to be ill-suited for the work carried out by academic staff teaching and researching modern geography.

**B.2(v) Textbooks**
The cost and lack of sufficient number of textbooks was identified as a concern in the Department. Textbooks can be very costly and we often find our teaching material relies on specific texts. I can think of two possible solutions. 1) Contact publishers of textbooks and ask for textbooks at discounted prices. You may ask specifically for older editions (which for some very popular texts are still very good) which the publishers may be willing to sell at a discount. 2) Begin developing new courses, and re-developing old courses, using Open Education Resources (OER) as much as possible. This is an area of higher education that is only going to continue to grow. Below are some links to information on OER that might be helpful.
http://www.col.org/resources/publications/Pages/detail.aspx?PID=357
http://www.col.org/resources/publications/Pages/detail.aspx?PID=421
B.2(vi) GPS Receivers for GE101 and GE102 Field Work

The use of Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers is increasingly becoming a fundamental skill required in the geography discipline. GPS technology can be easily integrated with other geospatial technologies, such as Google Earth and GIS which can be obtained for free (see above). Currently the NUS does not have any GPS receivers for student use.

Recommendation B.15 (Geography)

Tutorials could be implemented in both the GE101 and GE102 courses using GPS receivers to collect data in the field. Such tutorials would give the students hands-on experience working with a rapidly growing technology and make teaching concepts in both human and physical geography more dynamic and fun. A very inexpensive GPS receiver that could be used for collecting data, which can be used in conjunction with Google Earth or other GIS software is the Garmin eTrex 10, which costs approximately $150 NZD per unit. https://buy.garmin.com/en-NZ/AU/on-the-trail/handheld/etrex-10/prod87768.html.
B.3 History

B.3(i) Foundation History
The panel learnt the teaching of Foundation history is handicapped by an inconsistency of approaches and perspectives at the secondary level, such that the critical regional perspective is absent in the transition from national to global. This issue needs addressing at Foundation level and beyond, through a consistent and coordinated approach to covering certain key themes. The following recommendations, looking at each History course in turn, contain suggestions that may help address this issue.

B.3(ii) HHI001 World History
There is considerable amount of material in this course, which does not leave a lot of space for critical reflection. Injecting local and regional content would enhance discussion and critical reflection; for example, one critical area of discussion is about the pervasive influence of the church on almost every aspect of life. The plural authority structure based on custom, church and constitutional government hierarchies (aganu‘u, eaikesia ma le fa‘avae ole malo) challenges inherent critical thinking patterns with potentially providing a central platform for subsequent courses.

Recommendation B.16 (History)
The transition of teaching material from national to regional to global be addressed at the secondary level and reflected at subsequent tertiary level, and content streamlined according to local/regional issues and priorities.

B.3(iii) HHI002 Pacific History
The course covers an extensive period, both ancient and contemporary, from pre-contact to 20th century. Regionalism, security and globalization would be better served if removed to form a separate course. The contemporary and prehistory/ancient history would be better served if separated into different courses, with contemporary history moved to rebuild HIST206 leaving HIST002 to focus on the European-Pacific encounter 1770s to 1900 (when Pacific Islands became colonial possessions).

Recommendation B.17 (History)
Re-focus HIST002 on Pacific-European encounter from first arrival to 1900 and relocate contemporary history material to HIST206.

B.3(iv) HHI104 Ancient Civilizations
In an attempt to minimize duplication of first year introductory courses at tertiary institutions and free up staff to do research, the NUS and USP have collaborated to develop an online first year pre-history course, currently on trial in Semester 2, 2014. The NUS is considering the course as an online pre-history course to replace HHI104.
Recommendation B.18 (History)
Subject to approval by Senate, HHI104 be replaced by the proposed Joint USP/NUS online course.

B.3(v) HHI105 Modern World 1500 to present
Recommendation B.19 (History)
That HHI105 content be reviewed for duplication and reassessment of material perhaps already covered in HHI001 Renaissance, Scientific Revolution and Reformation, Industrial Revolution and Imperialism.

B.3(vi) HHI206 National, Regional and Global Governance.
Governance is a major theme in development debate, and its popularity is due largely to its contemporary nature drawing on local and regional material for case studies. However, the coverage is ambitious with national, regional and global frameworks. In addition, there is a risk of duplication and superficial coverage with topics lacking specific details. While relevant, the course would benefit from re-structuring and the case studies approach strengthened. Further, removing national governance to HHI306 Contemporary Governance in Samoa would provide space for other topics.

Recommendation B.20 (History)
HHI206 needs re-structuring and the case studies approach needs strengthening.

B.3(vii) HHI301 Selected Topics in Samoan History or Governance
The material was not available, although in conversation with staff it was clear the course attracted strong interest. The course was research oriented with student research driving the presentations. It is possible to assume that such topics provide important indicators on course direction and design. A review of presentations of student work was not undertaken due to clash of timing.
B.4 Sociology

B.4(i) Teaching Samoan Topics
The review panel received a strong and coherent message from staff, students, and stakeholders that the NUS was primarily training and educating students ‘for Samoa’. Though it is important to note staff and students had strong expectations that further postgraduate study should also be kept open for those students who choose to move into higher levels of study.

The message that there should be a primary focus on educating ‘for Samoa’ required some unpacking to ensure that the Samoan focus was examined and not simply taken-for-granted. What emerged was a clear sense that a focus on ‘Samoaness’ needed to occur in the context of development in the region. Staff, students and stakeholders noted the importance of ensuring that students have a strong understanding of the Samoan language, as well as strong research and analytical skills that would help them understand the changing social, political, and environmental issues faced by Samoa and the region. Consequently, the way staff members in Sociology ensure international theory and literature is relevant to Samoa and the region is crucial for the discipline at the NUS. Staff are committed to embedding Samoan studies into their curriculum.

Recommendation B.21 (Sociology)
To ensure that Samoan topics are delivered as an integral part of the sociology curriculum, as well as to assist in other matters pertaining to curriculum, staff should hold an annual planning day to discuss the ways and means by which Samoan topics receive due attention in sociology at the NUS. At the planning day it may be advisable for a collaborative session to be held with the staff of the Centre for Samoan studies.

B.4(ii) Relevance of Sociology to the Public Sector
Those that spoke to the panel noted that many students will move from their Arts degrees and diplomas to work in the public sector in Samoa. Sociology staff spent some time reflecting with the panel on whether their teaching was seen as relevant in the public sector. Staff were concerned that the qualitative approaches taken in sociology were not valued by public sector employers, though stakeholders who spoke with the panel gave no indication that the critical analysis skills developed through qualitative methodologies were not acceptable to public sector employers. What the public sector stakeholders did express was a concern that the NUS graduates lacked some of the core research and analytic skills that were needed in public sector employment.

Part of the problem may relate to the fact that students and employers are not fully aware of the value of the transferable skills that a good Arts degree equips a student with, in which case the general recommendation about the development and communication of a FoA Graduate Profile may go a long way to ensuring the value of the qualification. Though the questions raised by both staff and stakeholders should form the basis of further discussions to ensure that the teaching and assessment at the NUS leads to learning that
meets the needs of the public sector organisations. An internship or applied research project in the final year of a BA may address the perceived ‘skills’ gap, though it must be recognised that such approaches to teaching and learning can be very time intensive for staff.

Recommendation B.22 (Sociology)
That representatives of the NUS sociology programme meet with public sector stakeholders to discuss the curriculum and modes of assessment used within the programme. The aim of the meetings would be to ensure these are connected to the needs of the public sector in Samoa and the nation’s diverse communities. These conversations should include discussions about the utility of reshaping the third-year teaching to include a project-based research paper and short internship opportunities in which sociological theorising and methods are used by students to research a perceived ‘public problem’.

B.4(iii) Assessment Methods
The current assessment methods in Sociology involve a high use of multi-choice and short answer examinations/tests. While this is understandable at some points (for example foundations level courses, where students are transitioning out of a rote learning school environment) it does limit the development of more critical thinking skills in favour of ‘fact-based learning’. In part the mode of assessment may have come about as a way of supporting new and relatively inexperienced staff in the sociology programme. Many of the NUS sociology staff have only a bachelor’s level qualification and little teaching experience, and while they are all admirably enrolled and undertaking teaching qualifications as part of professional development, marking of examinations using ‘marking schedules’ is one way of overcoming limited teaching and course coordination experience.

It is important to make moves towards modes of assessment that better reflect the types of critical thinking skills desired internationally from sociology graduates and sought by the public sector in Samoa (See comments above). This includes essay and project based assignments and even group work for latter-year students.

Recommendation B.23 (Sociology)
Senior staff must be given time to work with their colleagues in developing assessments centred on critical thinking skills, including more essay based modes of assessment; while less experienced staff must be given training and mentoring to assist them in the use of different modes of assessment. It would be advisable for the staff in sociology to develop a collegial peer review process of assessments aimed at building critical thinking and writing skills.

B.4(iv) Curriculum Redesign
The current sociology curriculum provides a solid foundation for examining the major theoretical and empirical discussions in the discipline. However, sociology staff themselves acknowledge that it is time to rethink the curriculum saying ‘it was designed by a single person and handed on to others to teach. It would be good having support to redesign.’ The next section sets out a number of proposed curriculum changes and a range of
processes aimed at ensuring the redesign of the curriculum is carried out in a coherent and productive manner.

Firstly, there is clear overlap between courses that needs to be addressed. Added to this, it is evident from the course outlines and conversations with staff that some of the courses have not been updated in the last decade and there is need to introduce more contemporary topics.

The curriculum is too content heavy which has led to critical thinking being crowded out of teaching/learning time. Some lecturers noted that there was so much information that had to be taught in each class that they found themselves just reading through power-points and not working with students to ensure deep learning. Looking to focus on core debates in one area of sociology, rather than trying to teaching the full diversity of sociological thinking, may enable more time for deep learning.

Through conversations with staff and students, and by examining material provided, it was clear there is little link between current or future research specialities of staff and the curriculum. In redeveloping the curriculum, attention should be given to ensuring that each staff member in sociology teaches a paper which corresponds to an area of research they are currently undertaking or are about to embark on. This would provide both stronger research-informed and research-led teaching; and allow staff to build their specialist areas for research. Students will gain from teaching which is directly related to research and efforts to create new knowledge.

Finally, with the importance of focusing on Samoaness; the desire to ensure employability in Samoa and the region; and, the restrictions which exist due to the size of the sociology programme and experience of staff, all taken into consideration it is recommended that the Sociology programme at the NUS be centred on delivering ‘public sociology’. This public sociology focus for the programme would centre on sociology for Samoa as a nation and for its diverse communities, allowing staff and students to contribute to public debates on social, cultural, political, and environmental issues.

Based on these observations five recommendations are made in regard to the curriculum:

**Recommendation B.24 (Sociology)**
The recommended re-design of the sociology curriculum must ensure areas of content overlap between courses be reduced. A scaffolded learning model between courses at the 100, 200, and 300 levels must be developed.

**Recommendation B.25 (Sociology)**
In redesigning the sociology curriculum staff discuss thoroughly how to focus on ‘public sociology’, that is sociology for Samoa as a nation, as communities, and to contribute to public debate (directly and through the attributes gained by sociology graduates).
Recommendation B.26 (Sociology)
To help address the ‘skills’ gap identified by staff and stakeholders, staff should look to pare back the content in courses and instead look at how to develop more critical analysis time in classes.

Recommendation B.27 (Sociology)
Where possible each staff should teach one paper which relates to their research interests (current or developing), and should ensure students understand that teaching and learning is being informed by, and is informing, research.

Recommendation B.28 (Sociology)
There should be an annual planning day to discuss curriculum and assessment. Initially it may be advisable to seek input into this day from mentors/advisors from sociology programmes in the region which are focused on ‘public sociology’. This would help the mid-career staff who have been taking the full responsibility for leadership, and need mentoring and support in this role.
Summary of Recommendations

Part A: General Recommendations

Recommendation A.1
That ‘learning environment’ be added as a topic for report in Section 10 of the Programme Review Policy.

Recommendation A.2
For future reviews it would be useful if the review team had available, before arriving on campus, a broader set of strategic documents and financial reports of the university in which to locate their conversations with staff, students and stakeholders.

Recommendation A.3
Set up an eLearning team of both academics and IT staff so that there is strong academic input into IT decision making.

Recommendation A.4
Seek support to install an online learning management system as soon as possible, and ensure staff are trained to use it effectively and appropriately.

Recommendation A.5
That a structured system of regular student evaluation of courses and teachers be allocated more resource and that weight be given to student feedback in both course design and to aid academic staff in the ongoing development of their courses and teaching skills.

Recommendation A.6
That the FoA senior staff meet with a range of stakeholders to discuss the introduction of new modes of teaching and assessment to equip students for public sector employment.

Recommendation A.7
The administrative support structures for the Foundation Programme be reviewed and systems introduced to ensure prompt and accurate administrative information is available to academic staff.

Recommendation A.8
That the University leadership, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education work closely to assess whether the Foundation programme as it exists meets the specific needs of the cohort of students likely to enter the College of Education. In particular, we recommend exploring and if necessary resourcing such strategies as a basic ‘English for Teachers’ course, or the implementation of a pre-Foundation programme offering literacy, numeracy and science that leads less able students into Foundation and success.
Recommendation A.9
The rules surrounding completions of minors be reviewed in order to make it easier for
students to take both a major in either Arts or Samoan Studies, and a minor in the other.

Recommendation A.10
The campus master plan responds to the need for student services outlined below. As part
of this, a physical space should be added to the campus master plan in which the
Foundation programme can develop a centre for resourcing, student advice and tutoring.

Recommendation A.11
The NUS ensures that the Campus Master plan has sufficient flexibility to respond urgently
to requirements brought about by changes to information technology.

Recommendation A.12
We recommend that the Vice-Chancellor urgently convene a committee of international IT
experts from major universities and technology companies who will be able to advise on
the best technologies and software products for this purpose, and on ways in which
international funding and technical support might be obtained. Review panel members are
happy to suggest people or organisations worth approaching.

Recommendation A.13
The NUS should continue to seek international aid and support to upgrade IT
infrastructure, broadband and wireless connectivity on campus, to supply new computers
to staff, and to supply inexpensive tablet computers to all students free or at cost.

Recommendation A.14
We understand that the appointment of a second counselor is underway; we applaud this
and note that the counseling team should always consist of, at minimum, both a male and
female counselor.

Recommendation A.15
That student learning support services be reviewed with a view to establishing a dedicated
Centre for Student Learning Support run by qualified staff and charged with providing
support for students of the type described above.

Recommendation A.16
That a Learning and Teaching or Curriculum Review Committee (which would be a sub-
committee of Senate) look at the overall assessment and curriculum approach at the NUS to
ensure that all areas are focusing on ‘critical thinking and problem solving skills’.

Recommendation A.17
That a Careers Advice programme be developed to support graduates entering the
workforce.
Recommendation A.18
That the NUS encourage and support the Students Association to improve communication with students and increase involvement in student politics by establishing a student newspaper and by instituting a system of class representatives to coordinate student feedback to university leadership.

Recommendation A.19
That the development of documented mentoring plans for junior and mid-level staff members be prioritized. Given that a large number of staff are graduates with first degrees, it is particularly recommended the Dean and departmental heads work with staff to develop career pathways which recognize fully the importance of post-graduate qualifications, research opportunities and publications, and professional development.

Recommendation A.20
That the FoA identify areas in which mentoring at a senior level is required and consider approaching experts in the discipline from Australia, New Zealand and the USP who might support and advise the NUS staff and departments. Panel members are happy to consult and advise on the development of productive relationships with appropriate people.

Recommendation A.21
That the NUS explore with the government models for increasing the employment terms of academics. As a first step the focus be on increasing to five years the employment contracts of senior leaders such as the Vice Chancellor and Professors and Programme Heads (even if these are not professors).

Recommendation A.22
That the Dean ensures all policies to manage workload are understood and implemented, and that academics are taking advantage of the policies to control their working conditions as far as they are able, avoiding such practices as allowing students to move out of assigned classes and float between teachers.

Recommendation A.23
That the NUS leaders and academics cooperate in a working group to determine ways to retain young staff without burning out people further on in their careers. This may involve such strategies as developing a larger and more reliable pool of relieving staff, or reaching out to other universities in the region to identify academics with the time and flexibility to be able to support the NUS in times of acute need.

Recommendation A.24
That in strategic planning all staff are given adequate opportunity to explore and share the many ways they contribute to creating a distinct, and therefore, global university.
Recommendation A.25
The Vice Chancellor continue to work with staff on the overlap in the overall university mission (particularly with regarding the humanities and social sciences) and that of the CSS.

Recommendation A.26
That policies and strategic plans focus even more closely on creating a collegial and enabling environment, where the constraints upon the NUS researchers are recognized, both by greater mentoring support around research and by rights of appeal (possibly to an independent assessor) when research targets are not reached within a contracted period.

Recommendation A.27
That a process to reiterate and clarify lines of communication and decision-making responsibilities between administration and faculty, and staff and students be instituted; this process would establish clear, widely promoted channels of communication so that staff and students know exactly who to go to for what issue.

Recommendation A.28
The NUS web presence requires substantial work generally. For the purposes of this review the FoA should prioritize the posting of accurate and up to date information on the web site. The Registrar, who is responsible for content, should oversee the plan for this, and markers of success.

PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS ON DEPARTMENTS

Recommendation B.1 (EFL)
That processes are put in place to ensure that there is no delay in appointing required fixed-term and part-time staff for the beginning of each semester.

Recommendation B.2 (English)
Staff explore possibilities for amalgamating certain low enrolment literature papers into larger, team-taught, modular papers.

Recommendation B.3 (English)
When funding and technology permits the English staff also explore the possibility of offering collaborative courses in Pasifika Literature in English to students at other universities.
Recommendation B.4 (Linguistics)
REPACKAGE COURSES FOR CORE MARKETS. One strategy for dealing with the issues noted above is to identify core markets and offer courses that are suitable to these “customers”; that is, cater to the needs of the current or future workforce. Similar to the Japanese course relating to tourism, there may be specific needs that the courses in linguistics would satisfy. One example would be individuals interested in learning or teaching languages. Were this the audience, at least some of the course offerings could be re-packaged in a way to frame linguistic knowledge so that it specifically appeals to those students.

Recommendation B.5 (Linguistics)
UPDATE COURSE NAMES. The names of some of the courses could be made more transparent and appealing. Linguists know what psycholinguistics is but undergraduate students probably do not and the opacity may turn some students away. An alternative might be a name like Language and the Mind, and instead of Sociolinguistics, perhaps The Interaction of Language and Society, and rather than Syntax and Semantics, maybe Meaning and Structure in Language.

Recommendation B.6 (Linguistics)
INFORM ABOUT TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS. In course outlines and throughout the semester, it may be useful to focus on the graduate profile of the student and the transferrable skills that students are learning in the course. For higher-level courses, in particular, these would include skills relating to critical thinking and problem solving, skills that are crucial to many jobs and careers.

Recommendation B.7 (Linguistics)
EMPHASISE PRACTICALITY. Explore how to contextualize the study of language and linguistics more, and in doing so de-emphasize the abstract, technical aspects. The focus instead would be on the practical and functional aspects of language. Showing a student that the reason she cannot hear the difference between ‘th’ and ‘d’ is because the sounds are not contrastive in her language and thus affects her perception, may be useful for the student trying to learn or teach a language that has those phonemes. Or, it may involve placing more emphasis on writing sentences and understanding why certain common errors occur.

Recommendation B.8 (Foreign Languages)
That the Department explore the possibility of re-packaging the Chinese courses with a target audience in mind. This will necessarily require market research on the needs of students and industry. It may also be beneficial to reach out to the Chinese community as a means of attracting heritage speakers to the programme. There may be less of a need to change the Japanese offerings given that the Tourism course already exists. Making more students aware of the courses (e.g. through brief presentations to Foundation courses?) and the relevance of the subject to their areas of interest may be useful.
Recommendation B.9 (Foreign Languages)
That the language lab be sufficiently equipped with language teaching and learning equipment.

Recommendation B.10 (Foreign Languages)
That funding of the accommodation for the lecturer in Chinese be covered centrally, perhaps through a request for greater support from the Chinese government, so that the EFL operational budget can be wholly allocated to supporting teaching and learning activities.

Recommendation B.11 (Geography)
The Department Head in Geography assure continued collaboration with the FOS in the development of curricula using GIS, and that access to the teaching facilities (i.e. computer labs) and software by students in the Department of Geography be supported by university administration. It should be noted that it is not necessary to purchase expensive software to teach the basics of geospatial science. Two free alternatives are Google Earth (an effective teaching tool if there is good Internet access), and Quantum GIS, which is a free GIS software and does not require Internet access.

Recommendation B.12 (Geography)
Senior staff determine areas of specialization and divide the teaching of courses according to each staff member’s chosen area of specialization. As much as possible teaching responsibilities should be aligned with staff members’ research interests. This will facilitate developing strong, research-based teaching, and will allow staff members to leverage their teaching responsibilities with their research goals.

Recommendation B.13 (Geography)
I recommend that, when possible, staff leave Samoa for professional development at time periods not coinciding with other staff. While it is understood that the timing of professional development leave is determined largely by the scholarship granting organization, it may be possible, and advisable, to seek a deferment for a year or two from that organization so that multiple NUS staff are not away at the same time. This could be implemented as a matter of policy.

Recommendation B.14 (Geography)
Each staff member in the department have access to a properly functioning computer. It is common to consider the life-span of a computer to be 3-5 years. Computers older than this are likely to be ill-suited for the work carried out by academic staff teaching and researching modern geography.

Recommendation B.15 (Geography)
Tutorials could be implemented in both the GE101 and GE102 courses using GPS receivers to collect data in the field. Such tutorials would give the students hands-on experience working with a rapidly growing technology and make teaching concepts in both human and
physical geography more dynamic and fun. A very inexpensive GPS receiver that could be used for collecting data, which can be used in conjunction with Google Earth or other GIS software is the Garmin eTrex 10, which costs approximately $150 NZD per unit. https://buy.garmin.com/en-NZ/AU/on-the-trail/handheld/etrex-10/prod87768.html.

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The transition of teaching material from national to regional to global be addressed at the secondary level and reflected at subsequent tertiary level, and content streamlined according to local/regional issues and priorities.

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