

University curriculum development – stuck in a process and how to break free

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Published in 2013 in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35:6, 639-651, DOI: [10.1080/1360080X.2013.844665](https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2013.844665)

ABSTRACT

Changes to governance and funding of universities have placed increasing importance on teaching quality. Curriculum development is central to teaching quality. Yet as research has shown, it is rarely given priority in university departments. We sought to identify key barriers and facilitators of curriculum development in four professionally accredited Master level degree programs within the University of Melbourne, Australia. Our work progresses existing knowledge of curriculum development in three ways: 1) we provide a contemporary assessment of barriers and facilitators; 2) we gauge the views of administrative staff involved in curriculum development, and find that they identify important process-oriented means for improvement; 3) we identify the facilitative role professional accreditation plays for curriculum development. A key barrier to curriculum development was found to be the existence of cumbersome, inflexible, and lengthy administrative processes. However, we identify means by which this can be addressed, including the revision of long lead times for data provision required by the federal government.

Key words: curriculum development, facilitators, barriers, professional accreditation, academics, administrative staff, university

Introduction

Knowledge and understandings of curriculum development processes are critical to preparing effective curricula (Print 1993). However, despite the centrality of curriculum development to effective teaching and learning outcomes, it is rarely given priority in university departments (Aziz et al., 2005). The need for better understandings of curriculum development processes is within a context of increasing importance being placed upon the quality of teaching in universities. Significant changes to the governance of universities internationally have been occurring (Kennedy, 2003). In Australia, this has been accompanied by greater levels of direct government intervention in the higher educational sector (Harman & Treadgold, 2007), characterised by detailed and direct steering, and conditional finance relating to performance in teaching quality measures. Whether one agrees with these moves philosophically, this is the situation with which academics and higher education institutions internationally must presently contend.

Hence, understanding curriculum development processes, and in particular, how they can be facilitated, is of critical importance. Yet while existing literature provides some guidance about the factors facilitating and hindering curriculum development in universities, there are limitations. These limitations include; an understanding in the context of professionally accredited programs; canvassing the perspectives of administrative university staff involved with curriculum review; and updating existing knowledge given the increasing

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corporatisation of universities. We use the term ‘administrative staff’ as defined by Szekeres’ (2004) ‘people in universities who have a role that is predominantly administrative in nature, e.g. supporting the work of academic staff, dealing with students on non-academic matters etc.’ We note that many authors and indeed universities use other terms to refer to such employees including ‘professional’ and ‘general’ staff.

Our research aimed to address these identified knowledge gaps by 1) identifying factors that facilitate and hinder curriculum development in professionally accredited programs; 2) canvassing the perceptions of both academic and administrative staff involved in curriculum development, 3) and providing a contemporary account. We address these research aims through a qualitative research study of four professionally accredited Master level programs at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Our paper begins with a review of curriculum development literature, and in particular the factors that have been identified to facilitate / hinder these processes. We then discuss professional education, before detailing our research method and presenting and discussing our results.

Curriculum development

In the education field, the wider process of updating the educational experiences provided to students over time is known as curriculum development. This is defined by Print (1993 p. 23) as ‘the process of planning, constructing, implementing and evaluating learning opportunities intended to produce desired changes in learners’. It is contested territory with diverse underpinning values. With the aim of creating order in this diversity of views, there have been many approaches to curriculum development proposed (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Wolf & Hughes, 2007). Methods of curriculum development have been categorised by Print (1993) as ranging from linear (e.g. systematic and sequential), cyclical (continual process), to dynamic models (which are characterised by more explicit integration of intuition, flexibility and consultation). The models have evolved over time, in a trend which has gradually become more sophisticated, aiming to address recognised shortcomings of previous approaches (Print, 1993).

The emphasis of these models is upon *ideal* approaches, which has limitations. The models, and the literature in general, do not explicitly identify hindrances and facilitators to curriculum development review processes, and identify how they should be addressed within the models. We argue that in order to facilitate curriculum development, it is critical to acknowledge and plan for factors that facilitate and hinder this aim. We explored the literature surrounding both facilitators and hindrances, outlined below.

Facilitators and hindrances of curriculum development

Factors found to facilitate curriculum development include: institutional change (Naidoo, 1998), supportive educational philosophies (Buell Hart, 1986; Robertson, 2007) facilities (Buell Hart, 1986), budget (Buell Hart, 1986), positive group dynamics (Oneil & Jackson, 1983), and leadership (Bryman, 2007; Toohey, 1999). Additionally, changes to university governance have been frequently cited as facilitators of curriculum development. These include the introduction of the Bologna model in Europe (Colet and Durand, 2004) and institutional changes in South Africa (Fourie, 1999; Naidoo, 1998). Wolf and Hughes (2007) argue that curriculum development requires six key components: a Faculty champion, a curriculum facilitator or education developer, a plan that allows the process to be kept on track and for diverse perspectives to be acknowledged, the use of data, and an acknowledgement of the need for continuous improvement.

Likewise, factors found to hinder curriculum development include: the emotional dimensions of implementing change (King, 2007); budgetary constraints (Mok, 2005); politics (Leathwood & Phillips, 2000); changes to governance (Findlow, 2008; Vidovich, 1998); and, cultural issues (Fourie, 1999). King (2007) explored the emotional dimension of implementing major educational change (problem based learning) in an Australian higher education context. It was found that radical educational change affects educators' core personal, professional and collegial identities, with participants undergoing considerable cognitive emotional dissonance.

Our explicit exploration of factors that both hinder and facilitate curriculum development has identified numerous important aspects, some of which act in combination as facilitators *and* hindrances. Our review indicates that while the existing literature provides guidance regarding factors facilitating and hindering curriculum development, there are important limitations.

Firstly, there is scant consideration of administrative staff views, hence potentially neglecting the identification of important facilitators and barriers. This is a theme across literature about universities. Despite the location of university curricula within complex administration structures few studies are informed by the views of both academic and administrative staff members (Szekeres, 2006, 2011). A recent review study found that administrative staff members within Universities are largely 'invisible' in academic writings, often with complete disregard for their work (Szekeres, 2004). Szekeres (2006) links this negative and problematic depiction of administrative staff with the prevailing discourse of corporate managerialism. The second limitation is that little research has explored curriculum development specifically within professionally accredited programs, despite Toohey (1999) advocating open consultation with professional bodies as part of the curriculum development process.

Professional education

The education of professionals has many aspects which distinguish it from that of non-professionals. A professional is one who applies intellectual knowledge to specific problems or tasks. The learning for professional skill is based, initially at least, upon formal training (Friedson, 2001), such as that provided by a university. Partial professional status is allocated to graduates by the requirement that the degrees be accredited by a relevant external professional body.

The process of accreditation and self-regulation is based on the long-standing ideal that professional bodies provide overall benefits to society, for example in terms of improvements to health, legality, the quality and safety of physical structures (Durkheim, 1957). To maintain standards these professional bodies have pre-established accreditation criteria, and rules of conduct for their members. The accreditation criteria, focussed upon determining whether graduates are eligible to be admitted into the profession, examine both the content and delivery of education, and the knowledge and skills demonstrated in the work and practice of graduates (Koehn, 1994). As a result, the educational content of programs must be acceptable to the profession, while at the same being deliverable on an ongoing basis by the university department itself. Since the nature of the problems and solutions that professionals seek to deal with change over time, the corollary is that accreditation standards, and indeed the content of university programs themselves will require updating on a regular basis over

time. Hence, our interest in exploring the role of professional accreditation in curriculum development.

Method

Case study – The University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne (herein ‘the University’) has a governance structure that is relatively typical in Australia. The University Council oversees overall activity, which includes responsibility for appointing and monitoring the performance of a Vice Chancellor, and approving the mission and strategic direction of the University. Significant also, is the Academic Board which deals with high level operational concerns. Graduate schools and faculties are responsible for individual academic departments and schools which deliver degrees. In terms of the delivery of teaching, the University has thirteen faculties, which administer between them six broad undergraduate degrees, and a range of Master level and higher degrees.

The University made significant curriculum changes in transition to the ‘Melbourne Model’ in 2008 (Devlin, 2008; The University of Melbourne, 2008). Previously, as is still the norm in Australia, the majority of students enrolled in three or four year undergraduate programs that provided the bulk of their education, including pathways for professional education. The University now follows a ‘three plus two’ model, (with some exceptions) in which a broad undergraduate degree is followed by a professionally focussed Masters, a significant reform of the way tertiary education is typically delivered in Australia. As part of the transition to the Melbourne Model, the high level Melbourne Experience Group was established by the Vice Chancellor to consider operational matters to enhance the ‘Melbourne Experience’ for students. It provides advice on government policy, and establishes priorities for programs, services and facilities.

The processes for changes to programs (e.g. formalising curriculum development decisions) at the University include a number of steps requiring approvals. Major changes to courses need to be approved at a concept proposal stage before full proposals are developed for approval by the Academic Board, and must follow the *Course Approval & Management Procedures* (The University of Melbourne Academic Board, 2013). The main steps are set out in Table 1. The standard cycle of meetings requires that the process is commenced in April for changes to curriculum in the following year. Importantly, these times and processes are only the formal university level components and do not include the range of activities required within a given discipline or Faculty, such as staff meetings and Faculty committees. There are also federal government factors influencing this timeline.

The main body of legislation governing higher education in Australia is the Australian Government’s *Higher Education Support Act (2003)* (the Act). The Act primarily provides for the Commonwealth to give financial support for higher education and certain vocational education and training. The Act sets out: quality, accountability, fairness, compliance, contribution and fee requirements of these Higher Education Providers. Section 19-70 (1) requires the higher education provider to give the Minister any statistical and other information that they require from the provider in respect of: (a) the provision of higher education, and (b) compliance with the requirements of the Act. An example of such information required by the Minister is that data for all courses to be offered in 2010 was required by 1 August 2009 (the year of our study). Thus, in order to meet this timeframe,

Universities have to set earlier internal timelines. The motivation for the collection of this data is to compile information on-line in a central communication node for students. Note late changes can be made in particular circumstances.

Table 1: Main steps in gaining approval for course and subject changes at The University of Melbourne

Step	Nature of Approval and Approving Agency	Time Shown as Months in Advance of Delivery of Subject/ Course*
1	Program Coordinator or Academic Reports formally intention to commence.	11
2	Faculty Committee	10
3	Concept proposals (where required) Academic Board	9
4	Program proposals – paper submission	9
5	Selection Procedures Committee (SPC)	8
6	Academic Programs Committee (APC)	8
7	Academic Board	7

Source: Academic Board (2012)

* Assumes 1st Semester Subject. For 2nd Semester add 6 months

Participants

The four Master level programs studied were chosen on the basis of covering a wide range of professions (one each from the Faculty of Engineering and Medicine, and two from the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning). Each of the degrees is professionally accredited. Our recruitment approach was to confirm that the Head of Program (the leaders of disciplines responsible for teaching) was willing to participate before recruiting other respondents. Three programs were approached but not pursued because the Head of Program declined to participate.

Participation in the research was voluntary. A total of sixteen academics and eight administrative staff involved in curriculum delivery and management of the four programs, and four staff members with involvement in curriculum development at the University level (Academic Board) were interviewed during May and June 2009. There were twenty eight participants in total. Table 2 provides an overview of the participants. When selecting participants, we sought a balance in gender and experience.

Table 2: Study participants

Participant Type	n
Program Level	
1. Heads of Program	4
2. Academic staff members	12
3. Administrative staff members involved with curriculum management at the program level	8
University Level	
4. Academic staff members on the Academic Board	2
5. Administrative staff members involved in curriculum management at the university level	2

Research approach

The key method employed to address our research aims was qualitative interviews. Key topics addressed in the interviews included: processes of curriculum development and review; perceived facilitators and hindrances to curriculum development and review; and suggested initiatives for improving curriculum development processes. The interviews were

conducted by the authors and a research assistant. In order to ensure consistency between interviewers, standard prompts were developed for each question. Regular meetings were held to discuss the progress of the study.

With the consent of participants, interviews were recorded and transcribed, and respondents were provided anonymity. The average interview length was 34 minutes. The transcribed responses were entered into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. Responses were coded in line with conventions advocated by Marshall (2002), and Babbie (2008). A key aspect of this included coding by two of the researchers for verification. The results of this coding process were categorised into a smaller set of themes for our consideration.

The results of our research are presented and discussed below in line with the key topics emerging: caught between different timeframes and process; leadership and collaboration; the profession and accreditation; and different perspectives.

Caught between different timeframes and processes

In keeping with extant literature, institutional change (Naidoo, 1998) was identified as a facilitator of curriculum development. Respondents from three of the programs stated curriculum review was stimulated by the introduction of the Melbourne Model, For example:

Certainly when I first got here the university was making the shift to the Melbourne model. So I was involved ... there were discussions at the program level as to how we would restructure the course and what we would do.

While the Melbourne Model was an identified facilitator of change, the processes to achieve change were identified as barriers. Our research revealed that the cumbersome nature of processes required to facilitate change, while bureaucratically 'logical' and supported by higher level policy, was a frequently raised impediment to proper curriculum development and review. This is in line with extant literature that finds university governance as a hindrance to curriculum development (Findlow, 2008; Vidovich, 1998).

The university's key policy regarding the scholarship and practice of teaching *Nine Principles Guiding Teaching and Learning* (James & Baldwin, 2007) is strongly oriented to curriculum review, requiring that Melbourne degrees provide a progressive range of learning experiences to students that are kept up to date via ongoing review processes. Despite this clear policy support for curriculum review, many administrative staff in particular considered that multiple discouragements to curriculum improvement 'framed' their role. Administrative staff are often tasked with ensuring that review processes meet a range of timeline and content requirements (as detailed in Table 1). One administrative staff member, confronted with the difficulties of administering course and subject change processes, while helping academics, and charting the problems of communication between the various committees and levels, stated:

I mean it sounds simple. But at the moment as far as university systems go it is an incredibly labour intensive, complex process, because it is multiple forms in multiple places for multiple areas...the committee approval timelines, which are tied in with the systems we've got in place for publishing handbooks, timetables; not just publishing them, also putting them together, compiling them, provide information to students and reporting data about courses, subject offerings to the federal government as well. So all those things have these sort of long lead-in times and make it very hard to respond quickly to things.

As highlighted in this quote, a significant issue raised by many participants was the University timelines for production of subject information changes needing approval by the academic board (detailed in Table 1), driven in turn by federal government timelines (detailed earlier). These due dates are well in advance of the teaching semester (at times more than a year before, and before its previous offering has been completed). For academics there was a strong perception that this did not allow adequate time for review of the subject material, and for administrative staff this was the source of frustration and tension raised by dissatisfied academic staff, and acknowledgement of the constraints imposed. One response included below, captures some of this frustration from an administrative staff member, who acknowledges, like the quote above, that the federal government requirements drive aspects of the timeframe.

... and there is normally reasons for them, I do think in some cases they are too inflexible, but there are certain reporting requirements that the University has to the government and certain obligations to students ... you can't just come in and make huge changes a week before you want to implement them.

It is noteworthy that only one of the four Heads of Program did not report difficulties in achieving curriculum and subject improvement. Examination of the setting suggests that this is likely a result of the culture of that particular program being generally amenable to regular curriculum review. In other programs with less common cause regarding curriculum, when individuals acted alone in making change, academics reported experiencing anxiety and a lack of engagement with the overall program. This accords with Fourie (1999) who found that cultural issues were a hindrance to curriculum development. As stated by one academic participant:

...one person going off and doing their own bit about it and not really collaborating with others, I think that can be really destructive to curriculum development.

The most frequently identified hindrance by academics was lack of time. For academic staff, the need for compliance with administrative timeliness often pitted 'normal' academic cycles of activity against wider governance procedures. Nearly all academics reported themselves to be 'time poor,' causing them for example, to:

...juggle teaching, with research, with administration. It is often left, from my perspective, to the last minute in terms of, you know, the course is coming up in six weeks' time, let's start thinking about what we can do next and you have all these other pressures on you. So I think the major limitation for me is time.

This highlights the interrelated nature of factors facilitating and hindering curriculum development. While curriculum review may take time, it was also common for academic staff to cite the self-interest of others as a significant impediment to improvement:

...territoriality of staff is potentially an impediment or it can negatively twist the direction of the program just to appease a strong academic staff member who can twist or influence developments to his advantage or her advantage.

This 'politics' is supportive of the findings of Leathwood and Phillips (2000) who found it a hindrance. In our study the political hindrances were also influenced strongly by self-interest and time management challenges. For example, a common self-interest theme reported by academics was the poor link between promotion and teaching, and thus contributions to curriculum improvement:

Generally the academic culture is that you don't really benefit a lot in your career by putting too much time into teaching. I think that is a fair description of the current culture and I think that is one of the impediments.

An implication of this is that the 'advancement' of individuals should be better linked to teaching, and at the time of writing this change was being implemented. Some universities, including the University of Melbourne have made recent changes to the criteria for promotion, placing greater emphasis on the importance of performance with regards to teaching and learning. But the impact of this change is yet to be analysed.

Having access to people with expertise in teaching and learning, curriculum development and evaluation of teaching quality was seen as important for some of the Heads of Programs and one of the administrative staff at the university Level. Two Heads of Program mentioned the need for people to be employed in the Faculty or Department to work specifically on curriculum development. For example:

....appointment of a dedicated staff member whose role was to facilitate the different streams within the School, to facilitate curriculum changes and review... somebody who, it's their job to drive quality, to review quality ... a committee led by a dedicated staff member who has the pedagogical background to understand these sorts of things]....

Leadership and collaboration

Our findings support and reiterate the importance of leadership to facilitate curriculum development found by Bryman (2007) and Toohey (1999). Leadership appeared to be most valuable in so far as it related to fostering collegiality, collaboration and communication. On the whole, three of the four Heads of Program interviewed presented a strong, broad knowledge of curriculum review in their responses. They identified both administrative and academic facilitators to curriculum review at the subject and program level.

However, the responses of one Head of Program focused on their own subjects alone, in contrast to the other Heads of Program. It is noteworthy responses from individual academics within this program also reflected this more narrow perspective. Two individual academics within this program found it difficult to identify any factors that facilitate curriculum development, and then focused mainly on practical issues of implementing the delivery of their subjects, such as finding adequate tutors. These responses were in contrast to other programs that had a Head of Program with a more holistic view of curriculum which appeared to dissipate throughout their staff interviewed.

One Program's Head suggested the role of leadership in fostering collaboration included drawing in professional educators and others as appropriate to processes of curriculum development, as well as encouraging productive discussions. They also acknowledged the facilitative nature of resources, including budget for a mediator for staff curriculum meetings, and dedicated time committed to the process of review by staff. Resources and budget have been previously identified in literature by (Buell Hart, 1986) as facilitators of curriculum development. Another Head of Program likewise had a broad view of curriculum development:

We've started this process of restructure a year ago. It has gone through a number of iterations, a number of consultations, several full days of workshops, but it is critically important that that process be followed because unless there is a minimum common understanding and support from

all the academic staff then the development and implementation becomes a lot more difficult. And not only that, the quality of the program benefits enormously from having actual buy-in from everyone that is going to be delivering the program.

Both these Heads of Program acknowledged the importance of positive group dynamics to facilitate curriculum development in line with Oneil and Jackson (1983). For another Head of Program, a clear governance structure provided through an Education Committee, which advised the Head and played a critical role in leading the development of the curriculum, was a key facilitator – governance being a factor previously identified as a facilitator of curriculum development (Buell Hart, 1986).

The profession and accreditation

A factor commonly cited as facilitating curriculum development for academics was industry and professional involvement, with formal review processes and accreditation also frequently cited. One academic stated:

I think collaboration with our professional colleagues is absolutely fundamental, and it's been something that we have done... well over the time we've been here, since we set up the school... We've always included our [professional] people because otherwise you get into a situation where the University is doing one thing and the profession wants something else, and it doesn't work.

Many of the academics interviewed considered a key element of a professional Master level degree is the ability to modify and improve teaching over time, drawing in understandings from the profession itself. In three of the four programs, academics and Heads of Program identified accreditation as an important facilitator of curriculum development. Additionally, accreditation was mentioned as a facilitator by an administrative staff member in one of the programs. No one identified professional accreditation as a hindrance. Quotes are provided below to demonstrate the importance participants placed on professional accreditation.

...the Melbourne model has facilitated the curriculum development and review process, as indeed our last accreditation. I think its a wonderful opportunity for us to think about ...how our programme meets the current accreditation criteria and to be in the forefront of the new accreditation requirements.

Well the review was usually triggered by the professional institutes. We have to accredit courses. ... When there's a job advertisement it usually stipulates that you must be qualified for membership of the institute and its designed to ensure that you've had an adequate educational background ... the danger is that you might lose accreditation and then of course the course suffers and the students will certainly get very upset. You would lose clients. That's an important review trigger.

Responses indicated that without professional accreditation there may be few triggers for curriculum development. Thus our research finds that professional accreditation is a significant facilitator of curriculum development in professionally accredited Master level programs.

Different perspectives

In line with our research aim, our analysis paid particular attention to the views of administrative staff in comparison to academics. We found that administrative staff brought different considerations into light, and placed emphasis on different issues to those of academic colleagues. Facilitative factors identified by administrative staff but not by

academics included process oriented factors such as: streamlining administration processes; the use of plain language and clear communication; diplomacy (on behalf of administrators); administrative staff support; and the need for flexibility of ideas to fit into policy requirements. The need for big picture considerations was also cited:

... having a level of diplomacy is always really critical in these things. Also, looking at someone's proposal or talking to someone about an idea and being able to see how it might affect a wider range of people like students, potential students and also academics in the program. So having that ability to see widely is really helpful doing this sort of stuff.

With regards to emphasis, all administrative staff interviewed emphasised the importance of clear and appropriate governance and administration processes for facilitating curriculum development, more so than academic staff, of whom only two mentioned this as a facilitator. This issue was highlighted in the quotes and discussion about bureaucracy and process above. They are also reflected well here:

..I think, the committees are important and I'm not sure that the way they currently work is the best way, but at the moment I suppose they are the best forum for sharing ideas and taking a more holistic view of the curriculum across the faculty, and even what's being offered by other faculties as well, rather than thinking in a very narrow sense...

However, while recognising the facilitative nature of these administrative and governance processes, they (administrative and governance processes) were also seen as a hindrance by administrative staff, and in particular, cumbersome, inflexible, and lengthy processes, made all the more challenging when staff are not aware of them. Hence, there was an acknowledgement that while these processes could be facilitators, there was in many instances, room for improvement in current practices. In contrast, while many academics raised this issue as a hindrance they did not raise it as a potential facilitator, and they did not provide it with as much emphasis or attention as their administrative colleagues.

In many ways our results are not surprising, because as is to be expected, the locale of each interviewee type's work focus with regard to curriculum development, transpired in the results. Academics focused on the initiation and content of curriculum development, and the administrative staff, the process and formalisation of this. What is important, is that by explicitly considering the views of administrative staff, we have been able to capture the aspects of administrative and governance processes which may further facilitate curriculum development. We were also able to identify the driving force of much of the administrative hindrance (inflexible and excessively in advance timeframes) identified by many participants, which was the federal government reporting requirements. It is ironic that the governance change instituted by federal government which aims to enhance teaching quality may indeed be a key hindrance to achieving improvements in teaching quality.

Conclusion

We explored the factors hindering and facilitating curriculum development in four professionally accredited Masters programs at the University of Melbourne, which has recently undertaken an institution wide change in the structure of education through the implementation of the Melbourne Model. This contributes to knowledge in three major ways: 1) identifying factors that facilitate and hinder curriculum development in professionally accredited programs; 2) canvassing the perceptions of both academic and administrative staff involved in curriculum development, and 3) providing contemporary analysis.

Professional accreditation was found to be a strong instigator of curriculum development. The need to satisfy accreditation and to interact with industry provided a rich and beneficial stimulus for curriculum development. Accreditation provided for refreshed curricula, ensuring the ongoing relevance of learning experiences to the profession, while providing a bridge between academic and practice concerns, and drawing on student feedback.

Important insights into curriculum development facilitators and hindrances were established by consulting with administrative staff members. The importance of clear and appropriate governance and administration processes for facilitating curriculum development was emphasised in particular. This interacted with the main hindrance identified by academics which was 'time'. The time taken to review teaching, allied with a perceived lack of resources, discouraged academics. Additionally, the difficulties of undertaking necessary reviews of curricula with extended timeframes for completion, firstly within programs and faculties, and subsequently wider university processes and federal government reporting requirements, was often found to discourage and frustrate development processes. In contrast, the wider institutional changes at the University appear to have positively stimulated curriculum reviews and development.

A number of illuminating suggestions to facilitate better practice in curriculum development and review were provided by respondents. These were particularly pertinent given the respondents' everyday dealings with these matters. These suggestions ranged from new centralised online administrative processes for curriculum review, to dedicated teaching and learning support staff embedded in faculties to assist with curriculum development, to increasing the flexibility of university timeframes surrounding curriculum changes. However, each of these suggestions will have resource or policy implications. Thus, being able to identify which of the improvements will facilitate the greatest pedagogical benefit will be important. Thus future research could try to measure such benefit, preferably drawing upon existing cases through observable data.

The key recommendations arising from our research include:

- 1) the federal government should review the necessity of the large lead times for the data requirements placed on universities
- 2) Faculty and university wide administrative process to facilitate curriculum development should be improved, in particular to streamline processes, shorten timeframes where possible, and to clarify communications
- 3) Degrees aligned with professions, but which are not yet professionally accredited, should aim to achieve accreditation, and to maintain it

While our research was conducted in a particular Australian case study, we believe our findings will be beneficial to inform institutions outside the Australian context, and both professional and non-professional degrees.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by a grant received from the University of Melbourne's Provost Learning and Teaching Initiative Grant Scheme 2009. We thank Lisa Feim and Romy Davidov for research assistance provided, and to the participants of the study for their time.

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Title:

University curriculum development - stuck in a process and how to break free

Date:

2013-11-12

Citation:

Hurlimann, A., March, A. & Robins, J. (2013). University curriculum development - stuck in a process and how to break free. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35 (6), pp.639-651. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2013.844665>.

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