Responses to Griffith Law Students, Submitted by GULS and GUSLA
Paul Mazerolle, Pro Vice Chancellor, Arts, Education and Law

Thank you for submitting your questions regarding the proposed re-structure of the AEL Group. I am happy to respond to your concerns.

1. What are the roles, responsibilities of the Dean L+T, Dean Academic, Dean Research, School of Law, Head of School, and School of Law, Deputy Head of School, School of Law

The **Dean Learning and Teaching** will have responsibility for advancing and supporting the teaching and learning function across the entire Arts, Education and Law group. Their role is largely strategic, ensuring that innovation and new developments (new programs, etc) in teaching and learning occur across AEL. They will provide support for the teaching and learning function in each school or college across AEL and, importantly, will represent AEL interests across the entire university when dealing with other Deans-Learning and Teaching. He/she will be a key communication point with the Deputy Vice Chancellor-Academic (DVCA) with respect to learning and teaching issues and would work closely with the head of each school in the group to facilitate the implementation of the university’s strategic initiatives in learning and teaching. He/she would chair the Group-level teaching and learning committee. The DVC(A) is encouraging all Schools to have their own learning and teaching committee, and a key member of the School-level LTC would then be a member of the Group-level LTC. The structure of the school-level LTC would be determined by the Head of School.

The **Dean Research** will have the responsibility for advancing and supporting the research function across AEL. They will assist individual staff, as well as the school and college research representatives (eg Deputy Heads of School Research, etc) in the research area. They will provide further consistency across the group in RHD areas, supporting accessing resources for furthering research, assisting in developing early career mentoring programs. In short, the Dean-Research, as in the other Groups of the University will assist Schools/Colleges in advancing the research interests of individuals, Schools, and group in support of University priorities and strategies. They will also represent AEL interests in research across the entire university when dealing with other Deans-Research.

The **Dean Academic** would have the responsibility for developing the internationalization strategy across the group, as well as assisting with staffing and related academic matters. Their role would be in assisting in academic appointments across the group, assisting in staffing matters, assisting in the governance across the entire AEL group. This does not mean that the Dean (Academic) makes the decisions, but he/she would work with the Heads of School to ensure that the university’s policies and processes are implemented correctly. The Dean Academic is the standing deputy for the PVC, AEL. Although each Head of School in the new structure would report directly to the Group PVC regarding strategic matters, accountability for performance of the school, and overall budgetary matters, he/she have an important working relationship with the Dean (Academic) in relation to the implementation of the University’s policies relating to staffing and some operational issues (see below).
As described in the proposal, three leadership positions are envisioned within the Law School which is identical to the number of people currently leading the Faculty/School—Head of School (Dean for External representation); Deputy Head of School (Teaching and Learning); Deputy Head of School (Research and Head of SLRC). The Head of School will have ultimate administrative and leadership responsibility for the Law School. They will ensure the School is performing appropriately and moving forward administratively and operationally. They will represent the interests of Law, internally and externally, will manage the School budget, staffing and other duties consistent with a head of element role, as is the case for other Schools across the University. As part of the consultation process I am examining the best administrative structure for the School in terms of ensuring strong leadership across both campuses.

2. How do these roles differ from the current model? How many positions will change in their nature? If the positions remain the same, why are we re-structuring.

We are re-structuring because the proposed new structure provides an opportunity to bring AEL in line with the rest of the University, because it will assist in planning, communication, and coordination across the group and within the University, and it will provide enhanced support for schools and colleges. We are re-structuring because we want to improve our performance as a group and University in research, teaching and learning, and to ensure that students’ have access to the highest quality education and learning experience. We recognise that many of our Schools are currently performing well, but we see the need to ensure that further improvements in quality and performance will be best advantaged by a new structure that has worked well in other parts of Griffith University. The proposed structure will provide for a strong leadership position in the Head of School, rather than splitting the responsibility across two positions. In the University’s structure the focus is on the development and empowerment of strong Heads of Schools as leaders, and in turn, on ensuring the strength and success of our Schools and Colleges.

The roles described above are fundamentally different from each other. Heads of Schools have a focus on the performance of their Schools, whereas the portfolio Deans across the AEL group will work to provide support across the group, working to support and assist school and other college leaders. This isn’t another layer of bureaucracy.

In terms of the nature of position changes in Law, the proposed three Head and Deputy Head positions are expected to lead the administration, high level internal and external representations, as well as the research and teaching functions of the School. Currently, three people cover these responsibilities and it is proposed that three people will do so with an integrated Law School. What is fundamentally important is that the Head of School and Deputy Heads of School develop an appropriate division of labour to ensure that the workload is manageable and the interests of the School are appropriately managed. As noted above, I will consider the submissions from the Law School about ways to achieve a strong management structure within the School with respect to ensuring strong performance at both campuses.
3. What communication and reporting channels are proposed for in the new structure? Is this not just another layer of bureaucracy?

The reporting/communication lines across the group would function in the following manner.

1. Portfolio Deans report to PVC
2. Heads of elements (schools and colleges) report to PVC
3. Deputy Heads of Schools report to Heads of School
4. Deputy Heads develop a professional engagement relationship with their respective Portfolio Deans (eg. Deputy Head of School in research liaise with the Portfolio Dean research)
5. Heads of Schools/Colleges develop a professional engagement relationship with the Dean-Academic on related operational and staffing matters.

The proposed new structure ensures that Heads of School have a direct reporting line to the PVC as is currently the case, but at the same time they can access the support and expertise provided by the respective portfolio Deans. As in the other sections of Griffith University, the portfolio Dean offices are not overly bureaucratic, but are points of engagement on appropriate strategic and operational matters. The portfolio Deans are currently a key communication channel (in addition to the Group PVC) between the DVCs and the Heads of School. This works well in other Groups and the AEL Group is currently at a disadvantage in not having group-level portfolio Deans, for example at the Deans-Academic and Deans-Learning and Teaching Forums.

4. What are the justifications for combining the roles of Dean of Law and Head of School? Would this detract from recruiting a suitable candidate for the role?

Griffith University is committed to ensuring the Schools are the key administrative elements across the University and that Heads of Schools are suitably capable and supported in leading their Schools forward. It is important that Heads of Schools are very close to and aware of the core administrative functions of their School and combining the roles of Dean/Head of School allows for this. As mentioned previously, of the 30 or so Law areas across Australia, 20 operate as stand alone Schools. The University is investing strongly in the professional development and support of its Heads of School and is committed to empowering the Schools as strong academic elements.

Importantly, the proposal maintains the same number of administrative people as is currently the case. Therefore, because of the important engagement roles of the Head’s role (and position as Dean for external purposes), an important division of labour between the Head and Deputies will be conducted to ensure that many of the administrative functions are shared (e.g. budgets, room allocations, etc).

Griffith Law School has a strong national and international reputation and the position of Head of the Law School at Griffith University will be attractive to many people. As mentioned before, because the proposed organisation of Law is toward a model that is widely in place throughout the world, including in Australia, we do not foresee any roadblocks against finding a highly suitable leader for the Law School.
5. Can you identify areas where the current Law School and Faculty is suffering in relation to Learning and Teaching, Academic and Research? What benefits will this restructure bring to Law Students?

As mentioned previously, Law operates well at Griffith and the proposed re-structure is about building on solid foundations and ensuring that the University moves forward given the competitive environment in which Universities operate within. Our University has a responsibility in ensuring that we are structured in ways that are consistent with and will best support our strategic ambitions. Based on experiences in other areas of the University, the proposed structure is the preferred way forward. It doesn’t include cutting staff or programs or courses, and in that sense there will be no adverse impact upon the quality of students’ education. It does provide scope for greater improvements in teaching and learning innovation, in research performance and development over time, and will especially advantage Law students in the future. This is going to be really important over the next few years as the Commonwealth government brings in performance-based funding. Student evaluations of their experience at Griffith will influence the funding we subsequently receive. Thus it is absolutely essential that Griffith’s administrative structures are aligned across the University to best-achieve performance improvements in learning, teaching and research. Our performance will also be much more public than is currently the case, a bit like the “My School” website. Across the university, the push to ensure best practice in learning and teaching will be driven by the VC, DVC(A), then the Group PVCs and the portfolio Dean, to the Head of School.

6. If cost effectiveness is not an issue, how can other identified issues be seen to outweigh the perceived detriment to the Law School’s validity, independence and prestige?

The quality, performance, and prestige of the Law School are of the utmost importance to the University. The main academic element in Law is already the Law School and both staff and students generally refer to the “Law School” rather than the Faculty. The proposal is simply combining the Faculty’s role into the Law School in order to create a single, strong academic identity with streamlined communications, administration and operations. We are firmly of the view the validity and prestige of the Law School will not be diminished and indeed our goal is to ensure that it thrives and goes from strength to strength. The operation of Law at Griffith University is already based within the Arts, Education and Law Group. Most of the governance arrangements are already operating at a group level and will remain unchanged (e.g. AEL Board, Promotions committee, etc). Law’s autonomy under the proposed re-structure would still be as a stand alone academic element; however, there would be some minor changes to accommodate group-wide governance arrangements.

7. How will portfolio Deans cope with the diverse academic content and character across the 7 schools? Will this not take the decision making process in areas which can be quite complex and technical out of the hands of the current Faculty Deans who will have experience in these areas?

As discussed below, we would only appoint portfolio Deans who are capable of performing the role and responsibilities at a high level. AEL is diverse, but that does
not preclude an effective leader from assisting in their area (e.g. research leadership, etc) across the group. The School/College Heads are expected to be the leaders and content experts in their areas. Their roles and responsibilities are not being diminished or replaced, indeed our goal is to achieve greater empowerment for the Heads and the Schools. Their decision-making authority is still integral to the performance of Law and their leadership roles and responsibilities are not being replaced under the proposed re-structure.

8. Who will be appointing the new Deans and what factors will be considered in looking for suitable candidates?

It is expected that portfolio Deans will function at the Associate or Professorial Level. Under Griffith University policy, senior appointment committees are chaired by the Vice Chancellor or his delegate. Importantly, representation on the selection committee will be drawn from across AEL. The University has a robust, high quality appointment process and we would only be appointing Portfolio Deans who we are comfortable can deliver in the appropriate areas. We are looking for effective leaders who will understand and appreciate the diversity of AEL, who will understand the academic and student needs, and who will operate in a collegial and cooperative manner.

9. The commonalities between degrees from humanities and social sciences, performing arts and law are limited. How do you justify combining all of these within one portfolio headed by three super deans? How will this improve the quality of education?

The degrees that students currently pursue in Arts, Law, Education, etc are not being effected. We are not combining degrees under the proposed re-structure. As mentioned previously, Law already operates with the AEL group. There is no intention to change the way in which decisions about degrees and curriculae are made. The driving force behind the design and implementation of the curriculum would continue to be the School. The process for approval of new programs and changes to the curriculum would remain unchanged.

10. As a result of the restructure, there will inevitably be movement of staff and academics within the Law School. How can you guarantee that this will not affect the attraction and maintenance of high level academics within the Law School? How will the restructure affect staff morale and motivation? Will the loss of key executive members result in adverse consequences for students?

Under the re-structure, no losses in academic or general staff positions are planned. One academic member has resigned because of the re-structure. That person will be replaced after an international search to appoint a new academic. There are many strong scholars in Law at Griffith University and the reputation of the School ensures a steady stream of excellent applicants to our appointment pools. We have every confidence that any staff members who may choose to leave Griffith Law (for whatever reason) will be replaced with a scholar of similar or greater standing. We are in the process of advertising for new positions for the Gold Coast which is an area of need for the Law School. Every time an academic leaves the University, students
understandably are concerned, however it is important that there is recognition that we are committed to replacing staff quickly and appropriately. We are strongly committed to supporting the careers of existing staff and the proposed changes in structure within the AEL group will not impact adversely upon their professional development. There is no reason for staff to be concerned that the proposed changes will impact adversely upon their day to day work.

11. If there is to be no reduction in funding and no changes to the allocation of resources, who will be funding the new Dean positions? Will their remuneration be sourced from School budgets?

The funding of portfolio Deans would be consistent with what occurs in other parts of Griffith University and would be funded by the Group. We have a group wide budget, which is managed and apportioned by the PVC toward various elements. Under the proposal, there is a commitment to ensure Law’s budget is maintained to allow for the same level of performance, staffing, services and events.

12. Will there still be a discretionary Dean of Law or Head of Law School budget alongside the existing Law School budget?

Under the proposed re-structure, the Faculty and Legal Practice Centre will be integrated into the Law School. Consequently, there would be an integrated budget, with Head of School being responsible for determining the funding of staff, programs and events in ways of importance to Law and consistent with current arrangements. In short, there is discretion to fund everything that is currently funded across the various law budgets now, and budgets normally include an amount of discretionary funding that the Head controls. There is no intention to change this process.

13. What will be the ramifications for the community? Will student bodies, such as GULS and GUSLA need to fill a much larger role to ensure the standard and access to further education and career prospects for GLS students continues? If so, how will this then affect these voluntary students’ own study load?

The proposed re-structure will not damage or negatively impact upon the student communities or the roles, responsibilities of GULS or GUSLA. The current level of support to societies would continue. The current level and type of liaison with the legal profession would be maintained, being led by the Head of the Law School who is able to use the title of Dean for external representation purposes. The University is strongly committed to ensuring optimal outcomes for our graduates and is investing centrally in support systems (eg. in the Work Integrated Learning office) to help schools to expand relationships with employer groups. There would be no need for student representatives to increase their voluntary activities and thus impact on their study loads. The University is greatly appreciative of the time and effort that student representatives put in to assisting the University to enhance the learning experience and employment outcomes of its students. However, we would not want such activities to impact adversely on students’ study load and thus their learning outcomes.
14. What process is planned for engaging in industry consultation?

Industry consultation has proceeded in two ways, via direct mailing as well as engagement with the Visiting Committee. Over the course of the past few weeks, letters have been sent to Law firms, the judiciary, and related stakeholders in Brisbane and the Gold Coast regions. In all instances the University has reiterated its commitment to a strong Law School and has emphasized that the proposed changes will not impact adversely upon the quality of its academic programs. Indeed, the key message from the University is that the proposed changes are intended to strengthen and reinforce the performance of the School, rather than to weaken it in any way.

15. Has information about these changes been officially released to the students in other affected schools via mass email or any other official medium? If not, when will this information be released?

Discussions have occurred with leaders in the Faculties and Colleges across AEL about the best way to proceed in terms of student engagement and the views of the respective leaders have been respected about the most appropriate way to proceed on this issue. The DVC(A) has also met with the student leaders from the Law School. Different areas of the Group have proceeded in different ways with respect to consultation and communication with their students. Once the feedback from the consultation process has been reviewed, then the PVC (AEL) will communicate directly with students.

16. Can the consultation and implementation date be extended to reflect the need for more information, research and clarification?

The consultation period has been extended twice. However, I am reviewing the timing of the implementation in response to feedback from the consultation process.

17. Will there be independent reviews once the system is in place? If it is not working, will the recommendations of an independent review be acted upon?

The Law School was scheduled to be reviewed this year. In view of the proposed re-structure, it has been delayed until 2011. The University takes the review process very seriously and the review panel will include (and is chaired by) senior, independent members from the discipline. The review also receives submissions from the profession and interviews students, staff, members of the Visiting Committee and other key stakeholders. The review report and recommendations are considered by Executive Group, Academic Committee and Council. Thus there will be significant opportunity for feedback in response to the proposed system.
18. Given the current atmosphere of discontent and confusion from both law students, the legal profession, and the general public, what public relations exercises and communication plans will Griffith University be implementing to inform and clarify possible implications of the restructure?

Discussions have been occurring with Griffith media experts, as well as the leadership within Law about ways forward. The University is putting together a range of events and activities that are designed to showcase the strength of the Law School, and to emphasize that the proposed structure leaves no doubt about the future of the School. Such events will also provide an opportunity for the School to correct the incorrect messages that have been circulated about the nature and consequences of the proposed restructure. It is intended that students will be included in such events. The University would welcome and would certainly consider any suggestions from the student body about ways in which to promote the Law School at Griffith University. With respect to staff, I will be meeting regularly with groups of staff from the School with a view to discussing their concerns and ensuring a constructive and positive way forward.

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