Review of the High Achievers Program (HAP)

**Introduction**

The University Plan commits to high achiever programs and pathways:

**University Plan Priority A: Fully embed a high-performance culture**

*Instil an expectation of high achievement in students and staff, and provide the means for this high achievement.*

A1. **Strengthen high-achiever programs and pathways to attract and support the top echelon of local, national and international undergraduate and postgraduate students (University Teaching and Learning Plan 2008-2010)**

The structure of the High Achievers Program has not changed since the program was introduced by the Vice Chancellor in 2003. The program has provided an opportunity for a small number of high achievers in year 12 to enrol in a range of first year units providing they can schedule attendance at a university campus. The early success of students undertaking complete UTAS units with secondary colleges has informed plans to further develop HAP. However this process and the introduction of the UTAS College pilot program has raised a number of issues which need to be resolved.

The attached paper provides an overview of student participation and outcomes and the results of two reviews of the program and provides the background for the review of the program.

**Proposed Review Process**

**Terms of Reference**

The review of HAP will make recommendations for the future structure and delivery of the UTAS HAP program addressing:

- The intent and objectives of the program (including addressing differentiation from the University College Program; the degree to which the program provides /should provide educational challenge and extension, an on-campus experience, a UTAS pathway into a bachelor degree for Tasmanian High Achievers and early contact with high achievers in the secondary system)

- The identification of the target group and a review of the appropriateness of selection criteria for the program

- Relationship of HAP results to TCE and ATAR calculation, including results equivalence/conversion, scaling and maximum eligible contribution. This item should also address the process of managing the data exchange with TQA.
• The implication of students’ chronological age/maturity (student capability, student experience, university duty of care to minors)
• The applicability of learning program/plans (including maximum number of units to be studied, proposed pathway within UTAS)
• The suite of units to be offered and method of delivery (including consideration of distance provision, collaborative offering with senior secondary colleges eg Latin, relative equivalence of units within the suite, the number and range of units in the suite, relationship to TCE program, relationship to University priorities and national and State Priorities)
• Access and equity (including geographical barriers, timetable barriers, the equity of methods of delivery)
• Policy implications of recommendations

Management of the review process
The review management team will consist of the Director Student and Administration Services, the Academic Director UTAS College, a representative of the Associate Deans Teaching and Learning, the Manager, Marketing and Student Recruitment, a representative of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (Tasmania) and Principal representative from the Tasmanian Academy.

The review team will report to and seek advice from the Preparation and Pathways Sub Committee.

Research tasks
• Literature review particularly relating to student age and maturity and the student experience from similar programs nationally and internationally
• Quantitative research into student outcomes and progress of HAP students subsequently enrolled at UTAS
• Qualitative research into student experience, the perspective of principal and senior secondary staff

Consultation
Consultation may take the form of individual interview, focus group or short series of meetings. The following internal and external stakeholder groups have been identified for consultation:
The TQA (considering issues including the relationship between HAP and the TCE and testing the validity of the HAP/TCE conversion rates);
The Associate Deans Teaching and Learning (considering issues including suite of programs, delivery, learning program and plans, target group and selection criteria)
The Student Recruitment team (considering issues including student management, the value of the on campus experience and the general HAP student experience at UTAS)
Senior secondary school principals (considering suite of units, method of delivery, access and equity, learning program and plans, target group and selection criteria)

The research component of the program will seek student feedback (Ethics approval to be sought)
High Achiever Program (HAP) Overview 2004-2009

Summary
The number of HAP participating students has grown significantly in 2009.

A first blush examination of results indicates that students enrolled in the High Achievers Program generally achieve Distinctions/High Distinctions.

HAP students are generally enrolled in Colleges/ schools close to a UTAS Campus with most students coming from the Hobart area.

Reviews and reports have raised issues of concern and proposed alternative models and referred discussion to Associate Deans and UT&LC but little action has been taken beyond the establishment phase (2005).

Issues relating to HAP standards and equity have been raised by two senior secondary colleges in 2009.

Introduction
The High Achiever Program (HAP) was introduced in late 2003 as an initiative under the University’s Gifted Student Policy. The Vice-Chancellor launched the program at a meeting with government and private senior secondary school principals in November 2003.

At the end of 2004 a report was produced by the Academic Registrar and the Head of Marketing and Recruitment which identified a range of issues including.

- Admission requirements (It has been suggested that it is very difficult for EA’s to be gained in year 11. From a sample of nine high achieving students with scores 97 and above applying for Medicine in 2004, none of these students would have been eligible to apply for the program based on their year 11 results. On the other hand this initiative was developed under the Gifted Student Policy with a clear expectation of very high levels of academic achievement for potential participants – item referred to Associate DeansT&L);
- Counting of HAP subjects with TE score (VCE model quoted);
- Unit availability and the HAP structure (a more restricted and focused set of extension units recommended… [which] might allow different approaches to teaching, e.g in-college delivery item referred to Associate Deans T&L);
- Academic progress and other administrative arrangements (earlier closing date to allow for vetting of applications and follow up with principals. Promotion of HAP referred to Associate Deans T&L)

The program was more comprehensively reviewed in 2006. The process was based on three meetings with senior secondary college principals. Alternative models were proposed in this review which recommended:
• That the Associate Deans (T&L) give urgent consideration to the HAP units to be offered in 2007 (and beyond), and the proposed delivery arrangements including video-conference based teaching options, with a view to providing enhanced access opportunities for government, Catholic and independent college students throughout the State. [The proposed HAP units for offering in 2007 and delivery arrangements to be reviewed by the UT&LC.]

• That the Student Recruitment & Marketing Unit review arrangements for promoting HAP in 2007 and beyond to enhance student and staff awareness of the program in senior secondary colleges.

• That the procedures used to allocate TE scores for UTAS HAP units be referred to the TQA for advice.

• That the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) and the UT&LC give consideration to the two alternative high achiever program models suggested by college principals (i.e. UTAS units delivered in-colleges along the lines of the Melbourne/Monash approach [for possible introduction in 2008], and the Self-Directed Inquiry [SDI] syllabus proposal).

• That specific consideration be given to a possible limited trial of the SDI model and, for the purposes of exploring implementation issues, a meeting be convened with the Launceston college principals and their SDI coordinators early in term four to work through the issues for a possible 2007 trial.

• That the UT&LC give consideration to other ways in which UTAS might encourage and support the high achiever/gifted student programs conducted by colleges. [To inform this consideration UTAS should seek information from all colleges on the nature and purpose of any high achiever/gifted student programs conducted by the colleges.]

• That the advice of the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Technology be sought on ways in which the Faculty and UTAS might support increased participation of Tasmanian college students in the Australian Science Olympiads in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, in collaboration with colleges.