Report on the CSU Orientation Working Party
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Background:

The Orientation Working Party was established on the invitation of Professor Ross Chambers in March 2010. The brief of the group was to develop guidelines to provide an organization wide framework for the development of future orientation activities at CSU.

The Working Party consisted of the following staff: Liz Smith (Director, Transition – Chair), Graham Daniels (Faculty of Education), Padma Nathan (Faculty of Business), Paul Shaw (Student Services), Matthew Evans (Student Administration), Lisa Griffin (Library), Kerry Browning (Marketing), Libby Douglas (Faculty of Arts), Lucy Webster (Faculty of Science), Dianne Lane (Learning and Teaching), Brian Roberson (Information Technology), Kim Stone (CRGT), Sue Moloney (Office of International Relations) and Vicki Pitcher (Student Central).

Process
The Working Party commenced on the 12th April with a ‘think tank’ held in Young. This meeting was attended by Working Party members as well as Uni wide representatives (24 in total). Since the initial meeting, the group has met 6 times by video and teleconference to develop the attached Guidelines. In addition to the listed Working Party members, student advice and feedback has been sought and taken into consideration in the development of the guidelines.

Guidelines summary

The Guidelines are based on a review of literature and best practice across the sector and seek to ensure a one university, high quality approach to student transition. The guidelines include an articulated vision, objectives and good practice principles for CSU orientation.

The Guidelines represent changes in organisational responsibilities in some areas, and if they are to be carried out in the spirit in which they are intended, may mean changes to workload allocation in some instances. In particular, the guidelines highlight the important role academic staff play in the orientation process. The requirement of key staff to actively participate in the planning of orientation and O week activities for example, may require rethinking of workload and leave arrangements in key periods. The role and responsibilities of organisational units and Heads of Campus, and other key areas and staff has been articulated in the orientation process as have the governance and reporting expectations.
O Week

In discussions around specific orientation activities, the Working Party highlighted concerns around the culture and activities associated with O Week on some campuses. Many examples were discussed where activities were either inappropriate, or missed valuable opportunities to present an appropriate message to students.

Consideration was given to changing the name of O Week to something that better represented orientation as an ongoing process rather than one week of activity. While consensus was not reached on this issue, given the widespread understanding of this term, it is recommended that the O Week title be retained. However, all agreed that a concerted effort was required to achieve cultural change around O Week and to ensure it was promoted as just only one of many components of the student orientation process. Given past difficulties in gaining appropriate representation on planning committees for O Week, it is recommended that invitations to sit on the O Week planning committee for each campus come from the Transition Sponsor, with a requirement that each group report regularly to the Transition Steering Committee.