

Academic Quality Management Policy (SED08/115)

Document data

Document type:	Policy
Administering entity:	Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Records management system number:	SED08/115
Date Academic Board endorsement:	29 October 2007
Date approved:	13 December 2007
Date latest revisions approved:	
Approved by:	Council
Date revisions approved	1 May 2009
Indicative time for review:	5 years from date of last approval
Responsibility for review:	Academic Board Teaching and Learning Committee, in Consultation with the Vice-Chancellor's Committee
Related policies or other documents:	UNE Strategic Plan, Guidelines for Unit and Course Monitoring, Guidelines for Course Review, Guidelines for School Review, Procedures for Schools and Review Panels

Rationale and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to define and establish the University's approach to management of the quality of its academic activities, to ensure systematic monitoring and improvement of its teaching and learning policies, procedures and activities. This policy applies to all academic activities of the University of New England and any associated teaching partnerships.

Definitions

Unit and Course Monitoring: The annual collection of data about courses and units, using key performance indicators, to analyse the student profile, demand, student feedback, assessment outcomes, resources, and graduate outcomes. Monitoring provides the opportunity to address the strengths and weaknesses of a course or unit through annual enhancement plans.

Course Review: The in-depth evaluation of an academic program, including the course structure and alignment of learning objectives to learning outcomes, in the context of the University's strategic priorities, the currency of the curriculum, changes to the discipline, quality of teaching and learning including assessment, student perceptions and feedback, and feedback from relevant professional, accrediting and employer groups.

School Review: The periodic assessment of a School's academic performance, management and planning, incorporating review of the courses and discipline/s which are integral to the academic activities of the School.

Performance Indicators: Qualitative and quantitative data measures which provide a framework for measuring the extent to which performance objectives are being achieved on an on-going basis.

Quality Assurance: The ongoing, internal process of assessing a university's outcomes against its aims.

Quality Improvement: The use of tracking processes on agreed quantitative and qualitative measures in order to identify processes which are working well and those which may be enhanced.

Quality Management: A system which integrates effective strategic planning with quality assurance and quality improvement activities to monitor a university's performance against its plans.

Benchmarking: The use of qualitative and quantitative measures to place achievement of objectives within a broader environmental context, enabling the assessment of an institution's performance in both comparative and absolute terms.

Standards: An agreed specification or other criterion used as a rule, guidelines or definition of a level of performance or achievement.

Principles

The goal of the Academic Quality Management System is to assist the University to formulate strategies for continuous improvement and quality assurance of its academic activities, within the context of the strategic priorities established via its planning methodology.

The Academic Quality Management System is based on a culture of continuous improvement based on the four-stage quality cycle of Plan, Act, Evaluate, Improve, defined as:

Plan: denotes formal planning at all levels including university level strategic planning and planning by organisational units. At the team and individual level it reflects the planning undertaken by project and over time, including yearly or daily planning.

Act: includes all the intentional activities that are undertaken to meet objectives, implement plans and produce outcomes.

Evaluate: incorporates two aspects: monitoring and review. *Monitoring* is a short and medium term activity mainly for management, formative and developmental purposes. It may use formal or informal methods and make use of existing data, or generate new data. Action and monitoring usually develop together, informing each other, hand-in-hand. *Review* is a longer term and more formal process that has both formative and summative purposes.

Improve: identifies the process by which the results of evaluation - both monitoring and review - are fed back in order to generate improvement. This may cause modification to an existing plan or development of a new plan, and thus the cycle commences once more.



- Integration of strategic priorities with the operational processes of the University;
- A focus on improvement, enhancement and regular, constructive reflection leading to change;
- An understanding that quality is a goal common to all members of the university;
- The designation of accountabilities for action;
- The use of meaningful indicators to measure performance and outcomes; and
- Openness of reporting on quality assurance and quality improvement activities across the University.

Policy

1. Strategic Planning and Quality

- 1.1 Strategic Planning is an essential component of the University's quality management system. The University Strategic Plan establishes the top-level Vision for the University and priority areas for the institution to work towards, accompanied by action and implementation plans which are systematically reviewed and measured.
- 1.2 The University's Strategic Plan operates on a five year cycle, and involves annual monitoring of goals and strategies against outcomes. Overall accountability for implementing the Strategic Plan and its strategies rests with the Vice-Chancellor and the executive management of the University.
- 1.3 In addition to the Strategic Plan, the University develops a range of subsidiary plans for action in particular areas. The subsidiary plan which guides the development of academic priorities and plans is the Teaching and Learning Plan.
- 1.4 The Teaching and Learning Plan develops strategies, actions and measurable targets which follow visibly from the Strategic Plan. The University measures and reports its performance and outcomes against its stated aims. Prioritisation to achieve the goals in each of the Strategic and subsidiary plans occurs through operational planning. These are revised annually.

2. Framework for Assuring the Quality of Units, Courses and Schools

2.1 Evaluation of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate units and courses occurs through the processes of monitoring and review.

2.2 Unit and Course Monitoring

2.2.1 Units and Courses are monitored annually through the Unit and Course Monitoring process. The aim of monitoring is to determine priority initiatives for enhancement of the course / unit.

2.2.2 Annual monitoring provides the opportunity to respond promptly to both positive and negative student feedback, to changes in the student profile or disciplinary environment, and to make changes which are in line with the University (and School and Faculty) strategic priorities – which are also monitored and updated annually. Annual monitoring also assists individuals' performance monitoring processes and provides evidence of achievement which academic staff can use in promotions processes or when applying for teaching and learning awards or grants.

2.2.3 Ensuring that annual monitoring occurs is the responsibility of:

(a) for Units, the Unit Coordinator, under the direction of the Head of School/Faculty Academic Director as appropriate;

(b) for Courses, the Course Coordinator, under the direction of the Head of School / Faculty Academic Director as appropriate.

2.2.4 Unit and course monitoring involves the analysis of key performance indicators such as enrolment, progression, pass rates, grade distribution, completion, admission standards, preferences, attrition, course experience data, graduate survey data, unit evaluations and financial data, intended to build a profile of the ongoing sustainability and quality of the unit or course and where relevant to ensure improvement.

2.2.5 Unit and course monitoring is based on performance on key performance indicators against agreed standards and using established benchmarking processes. It is undertaken at least once a year.

2.2.6 Unit and course monitoring of the University's international activities involves analysis using key performance indicators and processes outlined in 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, plus processes the University has in place for the quality assurance of its international activities.

2.2.7 Unit and course monitoring is managed by the Head of School to whom ownership has been assigned, in conjunction with the Faculty Academic Director, Faculty PVC/Dean, PVC (Academic) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

2.2.8 In circumstances where a unit or course involves significant cross-School teaching load the Head of School, in conjunction with the PVC /Dean or Deans, will consult with all stakeholders in the unit or course during the monitoring process.

- 2.2.9 Each School will provide a report of its monitoring outcomes to the PVC/Dean who will discuss the outcomes in a meeting with the Head of School, Faculty Academic Director, PVC (Academic) and DVC.
- 2.2.10 A consolidated report of the monitoring process will be presented through Academic Board Teaching and Learning Committee to Academic Board and Council.
- 2.2.11 The Head of School will ensure that action plans are linked to the strategic priorities of the University, the Faculty and the School.

Attachment: *Guidelines for Unit and Course Monitoring*

2.3 Course Review

- 2.3.1 An in-depth Course Review is an optional process to ensure continuing high quality, relevant, viable courses.
- 2.3.2 Course Review may be periodic (ie once every 3 – 5 years) or triggered by a University-wide or School-specific strategic priority.
- 2.3.3 Course Review under this policy will not be required in cases where external professional or accrediting bodies demand periodic reviews of specific courses.
- 2.3.4 The unit of review may be a course (eg the Bachelor of Rural Science), a suite of courses (eg the graduate certificate, graduate diploma and masters level postgraduate awards) or a group of cognate majors or sequences of study.
- 2.3.5 Course Review involves evaluating the academic program of an award – the course structure, alignment of learning objectives to learning outcomes and assessment, in the context of the University’s graduate attributes, currency of the curriculum, changes to the discipline, quality of teaching and learning including assessment, student perceptions and feedback, and feedback from the relevant professional, accrediting and employer groups.
- 2.3.6 Approval to proceed with a Course Review is provided by the Academic Board Teaching and Learning Committee following endorsement of the Head of School. The need for Course Review is established through the annual curriculum monitoring process and forms part of the Action Plan arising out of this process.
- 2.3.7 The results of the Course Review, including an Implementation Plan, are reported through the Academic Board Teaching and Learning Committee to the Academic Board. Academic Board Teaching and Learning Committee monitors the implementation of the Review recommendations and reports on it to the Academic Board.
- 2.3.8 The Head of School, in conjunction with the Course Coordinator, is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Review committee.

Attachment: *Guidelines for Course Review*

2.4 Reviews of Schools

- 2.4.1 School Reviews provide a forum for regular periodic self-assessment by the School and external assessment by a panel of peers of the School's academic performance and planning, incorporating review of the courses and discipline/s which are integral to the academic activities of the School.
- 2.4.2 The School Review process is overseen centrally at all stages by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who liaises with the School on matters relating to the review. Standing Committee of Academic Board oversees the scheduling, establishment, execution and implementation of School Review processes and outcomes on behalf of the Academic Board.
- 2.4.3 Schools are reviewed under this policy at least once every five years.
- 2.4.4 School Reviews are undertaken by a review panel, membership of which is approved by the Standing Committee of Academic Board on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor's Committee, with substantial membership from outside the University.
- 2.4.5 Terms of Reference for each Review are endorsed by the Standing Committee of Academic Board on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor's Committee. School performance will be reviewed in the context of University, Faculty and School plans and the improvements made in the School since its previous review. Teaching, research and community service performance of the School will be analysed in the context of current and anticipated future developments in its constituent discipline/s. Specifically the review will assess:

Teaching and Learning:

Achievements relating to teaching will particularly focus on the quality, scope, focus, direction and balance of the School's courses and teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in light of agreed teaching and learning indicators, which may include (but not be limited to): enrolment trends, attrition rates, success rates, student and graduate satisfaction and the perception of key external stakeholders, and comparisons with alternative programs within Australia, and the award and application of teaching grants monies;

Research:

Achievements relating to research will particularly focus on the research performance of the School and its constituent disciplines, including their research activity, quality and impact, outcomes, awarded research grants, research publications, consultancies and research training quality;

Community Service and Professional Relationships:

Achievements relating to service to the University, the community and the constituent discipline/s will particularly focus on the role played by the School and its constituent disciplines in relation to its relevant industries, professions, professional associations, partners and the community;

School Operations, Management, Administration and Relationships:

Operations of the School will focus on internal management, organization, administration and staffing arrangements of the School in the context of its functions and resource allocation, and

the effectiveness of the School's use of resources in relation to accommodation, space, and teaching and research equipment and facilities. It will also focus on the key relationships and dependencies that exist between the School and other schools and administrative directorates of the University. It will also comment on the performance of the School in providing an effective working and learning environment for staff and students.

- 2.4.6 The overall composition of the School Review panel should aim to provide as broad coverage as possible of all the major disciplines in the School. The School Review panel may comprise:
- At least two (not more than three) external members with nationally / internationally recognized expertise from relevant disciplines or professional fields;
 - One Head of School from another Faculty of the University;
 - The Faculty PVC/Dean or nominee;
 - At least one (not more than two) representative/s of the relevant profession/s or employer group/s.
- 2.4.7 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) receives the Review Report and provides feedback on key issues to the Vice-Chancellor's Committee. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) circulates the Report to:
- Members of the Vice-Chancellor's Committee;
 - The Faculty Academic Director;
 - The Head of School; and
 - Members of the School reviewed.
- 2.4.8 The Review Report and a response by the School are considered by the Vice-Chancellor's Committee and the Standing Committee of Academic Board.
- 2.4.9 The PVC/Dean of the relevant Faculty works with the Head of School to formulate an Implementation Plan, which is then forwarded to Vice-Chancellor's Committee for discussion. The Report and Implementation Plan are then forwarded to Standing Committee of Academic Board for endorsement, from there to Academic Board for endorsement, and from there to Council for approval.
- 2.4.10 The Head of School, under the direction of the PVC/Dean of the relevant Faculty, is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Review panel.

Attachment: Guidelines for School Reviews