

**EXTRACT REPORT FROM THE SELF-AUDIT OF
THE UNE ACADEMIC BOARD**

prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During September and October of 2002, the University of New England Academic Board conducted an internal audit of its own processes and outcomes. The self-audit was conducted using a simple survey methodology. Three different surveys were designed, each tailored to a specific respondent group: members of Academic Board; non-Board members of Board and Board-administered University Committees; and key stakeholders interested in and/or affected by the activities of the Board. The design of the main *Board Member Survey* was broadly structured using an 'Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement' (ADRI) framework with a section devoted to evaluation of committees and contained a mixture of numerical rating scales and open-ended response items. The *Committee Member Survey* was a slightly modified version of the committee evaluation section from the main *Board Member Survey*. The *Stakeholder Survey* presented a single open-ended item requesting general comments on Academic Board, its policies, and their relationship, as a stakeholder, with the Board. Surveys were distributed to the target respondent groups via UNE internal mail. Numerical evaluation scale responses were graphically and descriptively summarised. Analysis of written responses to the open-ended items focused on simple thematic categorisation of written statements and paragraphs.

Current Strengths and Positive Features

The self-audit identified a number of notable strengths and positive features associated with the role, goals and activities of Academic Board. Academic Board would be well-served by continuing to maintain these strengths and, where possible, improve further upon them. The strengths and positive features identified include:

- The Board is perceived as important to the overall effectiveness of UNE and is generally well respected and valued by the UNE community and senior management.
- The Board generally relates effectively to goals expressed in the UNE Strategic, Teaching and Learning and Research Investment Plans.
- The work of the Board appropriately reflects the mission, vision and values of UNE.
- The Board has an effective working relationship with senior management.
- Board members have a generally good understanding of the role and objectives of Academic Board.
- The Chair of the Board is seen as effectively discharging the responsibilities of the position.
- Board members perceive they have had adequate opportunities to provide input into the business of the Board, through a variety of avenues.
- Board members have a generally good understanding of their responsibilities as a Board member and in implementing Board policies and procedures.
- UNE's Academic Board as well as Board and Board-administered committees are perceived to compare favourably with other universities and Academic Boards of which members are aware.
- Committee meetings, in general, are seen as providing effective avenues for accomplishing committee business.
- Committees, such as Admissions, Postgraduate Scholarships, Study Leave, Promotions, and Research Doctoral, are forming productive linkages with key stakeholders and gather and respond appropriately to stakeholder feedback.

Areas for Action and Improvement

The self-audit also identified a number of areas where improvements can and should be made. These identified areas provide the grist for guiding Academic Board's learning and improvement into the future.

- The Board should create more effective connections between its work and the UNE International and Regional and Community Plans.
- There is a need to improve communications between the Board and its key stakeholders and between Board committees, especially with respect to consultations about policy and procedural matters. Included here is a need to improve responsiveness to the feedback that is obtained.
- There is a need for some type of induction process for new Board and committee members to facilitate clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

- The Board must improve the development time, effectiveness and quality of its policies and procedures while maintaining an appropriate balance of attention on consultation with relevant staff and stakeholders. Implicated here would be improvements in how the Board seeks appropriate data on the quality of its policies, procedures and academic programs, how the Board seeks appropriate input from key stakeholders, especially in non-academic areas, about policies, procedures and academic programs and reducing the complexity of policies and procedures. Getting these activities right would increase the chances that policies and procedures are in the best shape possible before being put before the Board for approval and adoption.
- In conjunction with the previous point, the Board should work to improve the effectiveness and time efficiency of its meetings, devoting less time to minor issues debates and more time to debate larger, perhaps more strategic issues.
- The Board should implement a regular review of its own performance and develop more effective procedures for monitoring/evaluating the effectiveness and implementation of its policies and procedures.
- There is a need for the Board to improve communications with key stakeholders, including staff and students, to improve understanding of the Board itself as well as of the Board's review processes. In conjunction with this, the Board should closely examine its review procedures with a view toward possible simplification and reduction in number.
- The Board's responsiveness to outcomes from various reviews could also be improved. But this would have to be coupled with improvements in responsiveness in other areas of the University, such as the faculties.
- Committees, on the whole, need to develop better follow-up mechanisms to evaluate the impact of their policies, procedures and activities, especially committees such as the Research Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee and Degrees and Programs Committee (the latter two having now been merged into a single Teaching and Learning Committee).
- Several Board committees, notably Research, Teaching and Learning and Degrees and Programs, have tended not to monitor or evaluate their performance and this should become a more regular activity.
- A number of committees need to improve communication and seeking of input from key stakeholders with respect to both committee performance and committee policies and procedures. Policy streamlining and simplification should be a realisable benefit of improvements in this arena.

1.0 Context and Purpose of the Self-Audit

During September and October of 2002, the University of New England Academic Board conducted an internal audit of its own processes and outcomes. The audit was not intended as a full external review of Academic Board as was done recently at the University of Sydney (Review Team, 2001) or earlier at UNE (Review Committee, 1996). Neither was the self-audit a benchmarking exercise designed to yield extensive comparisons between the UNE Academic Board and other Academic Boards and Senates around Australia. Rather, the self-audit was a systematic self-reflective exercise that sought input and reflective commentary from members of the Board, members of key Board and University Committees and from key internal stakeholders in the activities of the Board.

The self-audit had a distinctly different purpose from previous reviews of UNE Academic Board, University and Vice-Chancellor's Committees (1998 and 2001) and did not have the same scope or intent as the previous review of UNE Academic Board conducted seven years ago (Review Committee, 1996). The general objectives for this self-audit were two-fold: (1) to obtain feedback for learning and improvement purposes from those closest to and/or affected by the activities of Academic Board regarding the functioning and effectiveness of the Board, and (2) to obtain information that could provide useful input into the UNE Portfolio for the 2003 audit to be conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency. A third goal emerged after discussion of the planned UNE audit with the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates in NSW and ACT, namely, to commence an exercise, using instruments that could be adapted/adopted by other universities, that could eventually yield comparative data for benchmarking Academic Boards, at least within NSW and the ACT.

2.0 Survey Instruments and Methodology

The self-audit was conducted using a simple survey methodology. Three different surveys were designed, each tailored to a specific respondent group. Draft versions of each survey instrument were previewed by the

Executive of the Academic Board as well as by members of the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates in NSW and ACT. Surveys were distributed, with appropriate covering memos, to target respondent groups via UNE internal mail in early September 2002 and responses were accepted until the end of October 2002. All surveys were anonymous and completed surveys were sent directly to the Secretariat Office. All data were coded and/or transcribed by staff within the Secretariat Office. The Chair of Academic Board conducted all data analyses.

2.1 Board Member Survey

The major survey instrument, henceforth referred to as the *Board Member Survey*, is shown in Appendix A. The covering memo sent out with each survey is also shown in Appendix A. The design of the *Board Member Survey* was broadly structured using the 'Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement' (ADRI) framework that guides the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in its audits of Australian Universities (AUQA, 2002, Chapter 19) and partially guided by a preliminary framework for 'Auditing the Academic Board', prepared by Professor Martin Hayden, Chair of the Academic Board at the Southern Cross University, in early 2002 (Hayden, personal email communication, April 25th 2002).

The survey contained seven distinct sections comprising a mixture of numerical rating scales and open-ended items. Numerical ratings permitted evaluation of specific statements and sub-statements (where an item stem was completed by more than one target evaluation object). Numerical evaluation ratings of each statement or sub-statement were obtained using a Likert-type attitude scale ranging from 1 (= 'strongly disagree') to 6 (= 'strongly agree'); all points on the rating scale had associated verbal anchors. A separate rating category was provided in the scale for respondents who were, for whatever reason, unable to rate their feeling about the statement. The open-ended items were designed to invite more extensive and possibly qualifying commentary on the ratings in each section as well as to permit more general comments to be made. Each open-ended item invited comments highlighting specific areas for improvement.

The *Background* section obtained basic information relating to category of membership on Academic Board (including the category of 'Observer'), number of years/months of membership in the current category, list of any prior periods and categories of membership on the Board, and a checklist of Board or University Committees (only those University Committees administered by the Secretariat of Academic Board) of which the respondent was a member.

The *Approach* section contained 12 specific statements (some with sub-statements) relating to 'understanding the objectives of Academic Board'. These statements characterised different facets of perceptions and understanding of how the Board approached the achievement of its goals and objectives. A final open-ended item was available for respondents to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding the Board's general approach to its activities, i.e., its general role, goals, structure and relationship to other key stakeholders and/or Committees.

The *Deployment* section contained 7 specific statements (some with sub-statements) relating to 'how the Board's approach was implemented'. These statements characterised different facets of perceptions and understanding of how the Board implemented its approach to achieving its goals and objectives. A final open-ended item was provided for respondents to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding how the Board achieved its goals and objectives.

The *Results* section contained 8 specific statements relating to 'how do we know how well the Board is working?' These statements characterised different facets of perceptions of how well the Board's approach and deployment activities were working with respect to achieving its goals and objectives. A final open-ended item was offered for respondents to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding how the Board learns about the quality and effectiveness of its activities and of the policies, procedures and academic programs that result from those activities.

The *Improvement* section contained 5 specific statements (some with sub-statements) relating to 'does the Board learn how it can improve and act?' These statements characterised different facets of perceptions of how well the Board responds to and learns from the results that arise from evaluating its approach and deployment activities. A final open-ended item was available for respondents to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding how the Board learns how and acts to improve its activities and the policies, procedures and academic programs that result from those activities.

A separate optional section, entitled *Audit of Academic Board/University (Board-Administered) Committees*, contained 8 specific statements relating to the performance of specific Committees. Each statement or sub-statement was to be rated using the same numerical scale as in the previous four sections of the survey. The respondent could nominate up to three Committees, of which they were currently a member, to evaluate against

each of the 8 statements. The list of candidate Committees was identical to that provided in *Background* checklist item B4. A final open-ended item was available for the respondent to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding how the Academic Board committees and/or University (Board-administered) committees learn about and act to improve their policies, procedures and activities and the outcomes that result from those policies, procedures and activities.

The final open-ended section of the *Board Member Survey* was reserved for the respondent to write any general comments they wished to make about the role and effectiveness of Academic Board and/or its committees and, especially, on where they saw that improvements or added value in policies, procedures and activities could be realised.

2.2 Non-Board Committee Member Survey

The survey for members of Board or University (Board-administered) Committees who were not actually members of Academic Board, henceforth referred to as the *Committee Member Survey*, is shown in Appendix B. The covering memo sent out with each survey is also shown in Appendix B.

The *Committee Member Survey* was a single page instrument, identical in item structure and content to the optional section entitled *Audit of Academic Board/University (Board-Administered) Committees* in the *Board Member Survey*. The only variation was in the instructions, which explicitly listed the candidate Committees that could be nominated by the respondent for evaluation against the 8 specific statements relating to the performance of specific Committees. The same final open-ended item was also available for the respondent to write any amplifying or qualifying comments or observations they wished to make regarding the how the Academic Board committees and/or University (Board-administered) committees learn about and act to improve their policies, procedures and activities and the outcomes that result from those policies, procedures and activities. Comments highlighting specific areas for improvement were explicitly invited.

2.3 Stakeholder Survey

The survey for stakeholders interested in or affected by the business and decisions of Academic Board, henceforth referred to as the *Stakeholder Survey*, is shown in Appendix C. The covering memo sent out with each survey is also shown in Appendix C.

The *Stakeholder Survey* comprised a single-page open-ended response item that invited the respondents to write down any comments or views they had about the current role and effectiveness of Academic Board and/or its committees and, especially, on where they could see that improvements or added value in its policies, procedures and activities could be made. The preamble to the survey clarified why the person was receiving the survey, having been identified as a key stakeholder in the business of the Academic Board.

3.0 Participants in the Self-Audit

The *Board Member Survey* was distributed to all 68 members of Academic Board (as of September 1, 2002) as well as to the 14 observers listed in the UNE Handbook (University of New England, 2002, p. 727). Responses were received from 29 Board members and observers – a response rate of 35.4%. The breakdown of responses by category of membership is shown in Table 1. Respondents reported an average of 20.7 months (sd = 18.3) in their current membership category on the Board.

The *Committee Member Survey* was distributed to 42 members of the Committees listed in item B4 in the *Background* section of the *Board Member Survey* who were not members of Academic Board in their own right (e.g., elected Faculty representatives or general administrative staff on particular committees). A total of 11 responses were received – a response rate of 26.2%. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the aggregated number of evaluations of specific Committees made by respondents to either the *Board Member Survey* or the *Committee Member Survey*.

The *Stakeholder Survey* was distributed to 66 specifically identified stakeholder individuals or groups. Stakeholders identified included: members of UNE Council, UNESA and UNEPA, and various administrative divisions of UNE, including the Teaching & Learning Centre, Examinations and Graduations Office, Equity Office, Dixson Library, Information Technology Services, Facilities Management Services, Academic Skills Office, Admissions Office, Alumni Office, Development Office, Organisational Development Office, Human Resource Services, Research Services, Planning and Institutional Research Office, records Management Office, Oorala Centre, Financial Services, International Office, Academic Registrar's Office, Faculties, and Colleges. A total of 7 responses were received – a response rate of 10.6%.

Table 1. Number of respondents to the *Board Member Survey* by membership category.

Membership Category	Number	Percent
Board Executive	2	6.9
Ex-Officio	3	10.3
Dean of Faculty	2	6.9
Associate Dean	5	17.2
Head of School	7	24.1
Elected Faculty Representative	5	17.2
Research Centre Representative	1	3.4
Postgraduate Student Representative	1	3.4
Observer	1	3.4
Other	1	3.4
Not Indicated	1	3.4
Total	29	100.0

Table 2. Number of respondents who evaluated specific Board or University (Board-administered) committees (aggregated across the *Board Member Survey* and *Committee Member Survey* respondents).

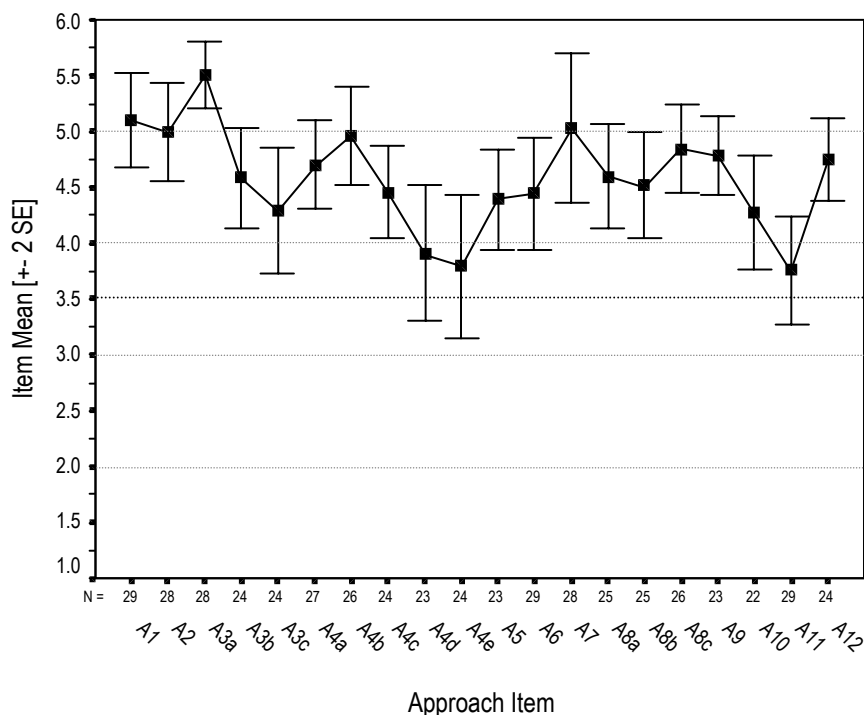
Committee*	Number
Standing Committee (Board committee)	8
Degrees & Programs (Board committee)	10
Research Doctoral (Board committee)	2
Research (Board committee)	4
Postgraduate Scholarships (Board committee)	1
Teaching & Learning (Board committee)	8
Promotions (any Level) (Board-administered committee)	8
Study Leave (Board-administered committee)	1
Admissions (Board-administered committee)	4
Tenure (Board-administered committee)	3
Promotion Appeals (Board-administered committee)	1

* "Board committee" refers to a specific committee defined in the Constitution of Academic Board (University of New England, 2002, pp. 729-732); "Board-administered committee" refers to a University Committee that is administered by the Secretariat Officer associated with the Academic Board.

4.0 Key Tables and Figures of Self-Audit Outcomes

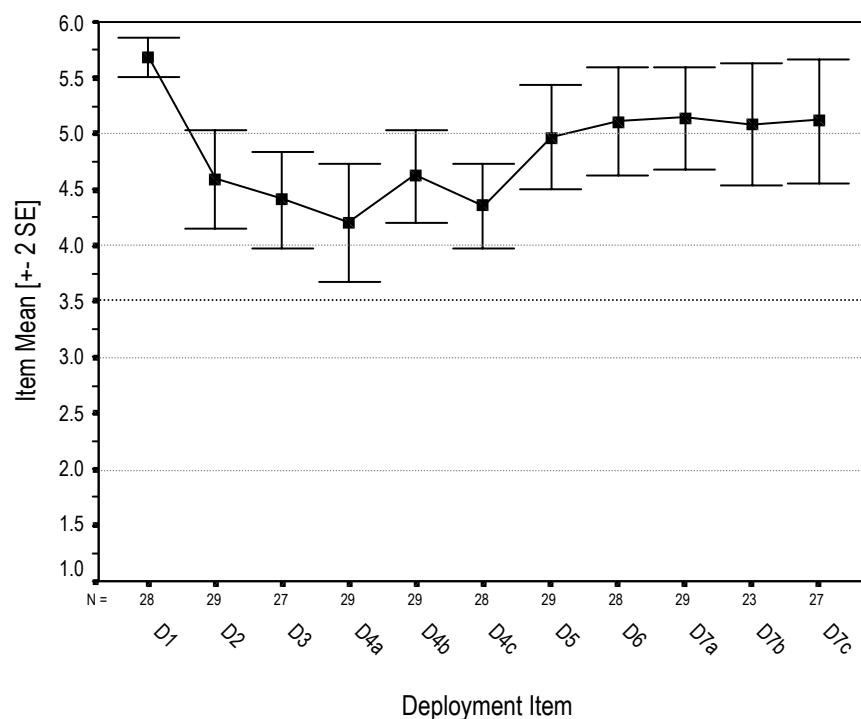
For purposes of this extract report, only the results for the numerical rating statements will be summarised. Analysis of outcomes is relatively unsophisticated, in part because the small response rates would not support more sophisticated approaches, but mainly because more sophisticated analyses would tend to obscure rather than highlight specific areas for future development and improvement. The results for the Likert-type numerical rating scale statements and sub-statements are presented graphically by conceptual grouping into the major focal areas on the *Board Member Survey*. For each graphical summary, only aggregated results across all 29 respondents will be presented as response rates within membership categories were too small to permit meaningful quantitative summary. Each summary graph will show averages for each statement in the evaluation domain under scrutiny. Each average will be shown with error bars defined as 2 times the standard error for responses to the statement. These error bars will give a visual depiction of the degree of variability in responses to each statement. The grey dotted horizontal reference lines in each graph depict the major anchor points on the rating scale and the black horizontal dotted reference line at 3.5 depicts the exact centre of the rating scale (conceptually equivalent to the neutral point on the scale). The horizontal legend line on each graph, labelled "N =" shows the number of non-missing responses on which each average is based (ratings of UR, 'Unable to Rate', have been coded as missing responses for purposes of these analyses). Each graph has statement or sub-statement identifiers and content summarised in a table beneath the graph.

Figure 1. Means and 2 x Standard Error (SE) error bars for *Approach*-related self-audit survey assessment items.



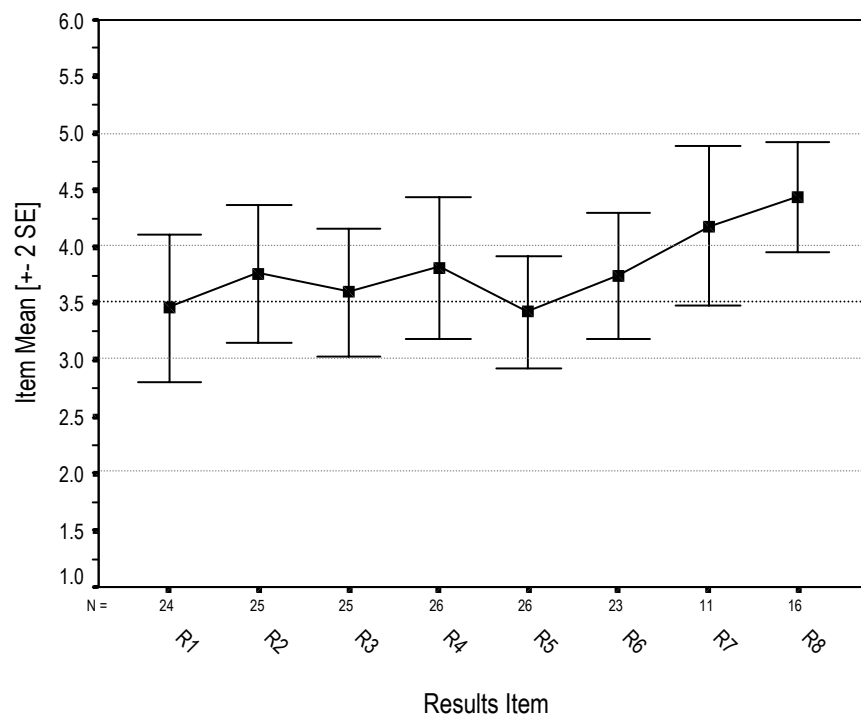
APPROACH (UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECTIVES OF ACADEMIC BOARD)		
Original Item Numbering	Analysis Ref. Number	
A1.	A1	I have a good understanding of the Academic Board's role at UNE.
A2.	A2	I know what the broad objectives of Academic Board are.
A3.	A3a A3b A3c	The work of the Academic Board at UNE is: → important to the overall effectiveness of UNE. → respected by the UNE community. → valued by the senior management at UNE.
A4.	A4a A4b A4c A4d A4e	The work of Academic Board relates effectively to the goals expressed in the: → UNE Strategic Plan. → UNE Teaching and Learning Plan. → UNE Research Investment Plan. → UNE International Plan. → UNE Regional and Community Plan.
A5.	A5	The work of Academic Board effectively facilitates achievement of the goals in Faculty plans.
A6.	A6	Information about Academic Board, its committees and its policies is easily accessible.
A7.	A7	I have accessed information about Academic Board, its committees and/or its policies on one or more occasions in the past 12 months.
A8.	A8a A8b A8c	The work of the Academic Board appropriately reflects: → the mission of UNE. → the vision for UNE. → the culture and values of UNE.
A9.	A9	The committee structure of the Academic Board is appropriately designed for effectively achieving the goals of Academic Board.
A10.	A10	The lines of communication between the various committees of Academic Board are appropriate.
A11.	A11	The lines of communication between Academic Board and its key stakeholders are appropriate (e.g., academic staff, schools, faculties, UNE community).
A12.	A12	Academic Board has an effective working relationship with the senior management at UNE.

Figure 2. Means and 2 x SE error bars for *Deployment*-related self-audit survey assessment items.



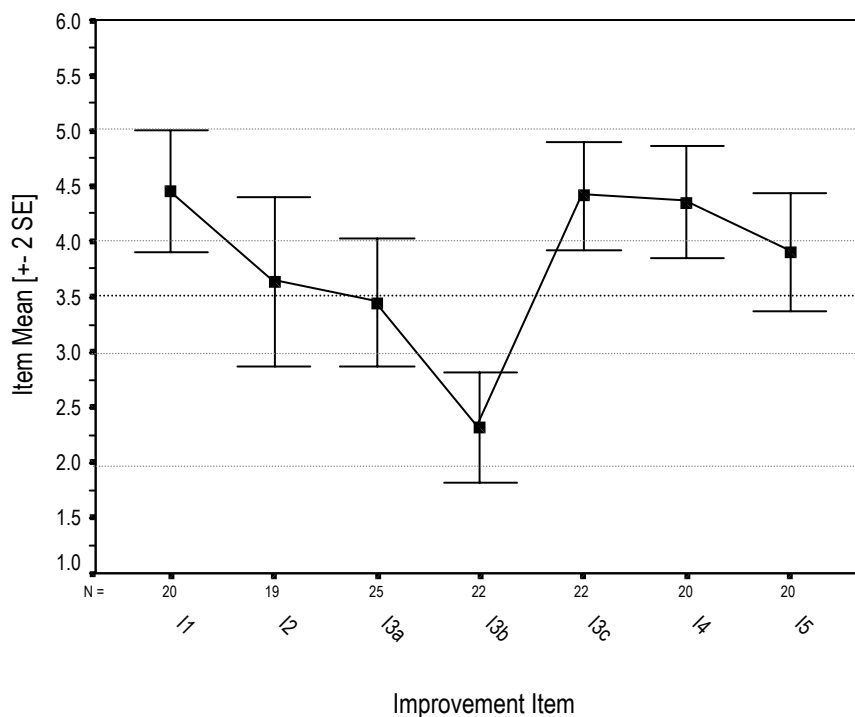
DEPLOYMENT (HOW THE BOARD'S APPROACH IS IMPLEMENTED)		
D1.	D1	The Chair of Academic Board effectively discharges the responsibilities of the position.
D2.	D2	Academic Board meetings provide an effective avenue for accomplishing the business of the Board.
D3.	D3	Academic Board creates effective policies and procedures.
D4.	D4a D4b D4c	Academic Board pursues its goals and objectives in: → an appropriately timely manner. → an appropriately consultative manner. → a manner that achieves high-quality outcomes.
D5.	D5	I have a good understanding of my responsibilities as a member of Academic Board.
D6.	D6	I have a good understanding of my responsibilities in implementing the policies and procedures of Academic Board.
D7.	D7a D7b D7c	I have had adequate opportunities to provide input into the business of Academic Board through: → contributions at meetings of Academic Board. → membership on/contributions to relevant committee(s). → direct communication with officers of the Board.

Figure 3. Means and 2 x SE error bars for *Results*-related self-audit survey assessment items.



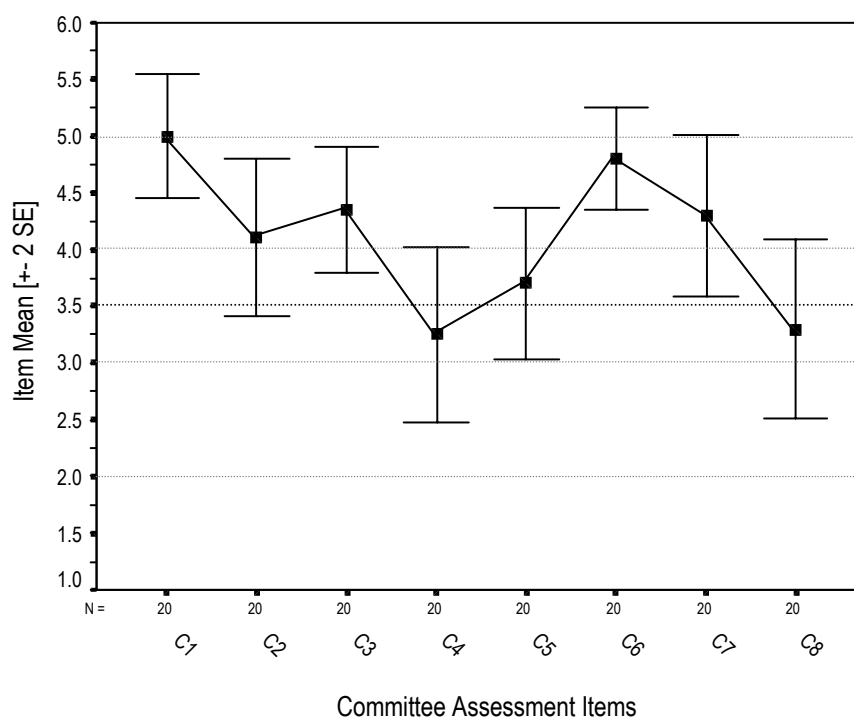
RESULTS (HOW DO WE KNOW HOW WELL THE BOARD IS WORKING?)		
R1.	R1	Academic Board seeks appropriate data on the quality of its policies, procedures and academic programs.
R2.	R2	Academic Board seeks appropriate input from key stakeholders (e.g., Faculties/Committees/interest groups) with respect to how its policies, procedures and academic programs are working.
R3.	R3	Academic Board appropriately monitors its own performance.
R4.	R4	Academic Board appropriately monitors the implementation of its policies and procedures.
R5.	R5	Academic Board appropriately evaluates the effectiveness of its policies and procedures.
R6.	R6	Academic Board seeks appropriate input from key stakeholders (e.g., Faculties/Committees/interest groups) on its performance.
R7.	R7	The performance of UNE Academic Board compares favourably with other Academic Boards/Senates of which I am aware.
R8.	R8	Academic Board's policies, procedures and academic programs are of an appropriate quality and standard compared to other Universities of which I am aware.

Figure 4. Means and 2 x SE error bars for *Improvement*-related self-audit survey assessment items.



IMPROVEMENT (DOES THE BOARD LEARN HOW IT CAN IMPROVE AND ACT?)		
11.	I1	Academic Board responds appropriately to data obtained on the quality of its policies, procedures and academic programs.
12.	I2	Academic Board has implemented appropriate follow-up mechanisms to evaluate the impact of its policies, procedures and academic programs.
13.	I3a I3b I3c	The review processes required by Academic Board policies appear to be well-understood by: → academic staff. → students. → senior management.
14.	I4	The review processes required by Academic Board policies are appropriate for gathering feedback needed for identifying areas of improvement.
15.	I5	The review processes required by Academic Board policies are effective in gathering feedback needed for identifying areas of improvement.

Figure 5. Means and 2 x SE error bars for *Committee*-related self-audit survey assessment items, including responses from non-Board members of Committees.



AUDIT OF ACADEMIC BOARD/UNIVERSITY (BOARD-ADMINISTERED) COMMITTEES		
C1.	C1	Committee meetings provide an effective avenue for accomplishing the business of the Committee.
C2.	C2	This committee seeks appropriate data on the quality of its policies, procedures and activities.
C3.	C3	This committee seeks appropriate input from key stakeholders (e.g., Faculties/ Committees/interest groups) with respect to how its policies and procedures are working.
C4.	C4	This committee appropriately monitors its own performance.
C5.	C5	This committee seeks appropriate input from key stakeholders (e.g., Faculties/Committees/interest groups) on its own performance.
C6.	C6	This committee's policies, procedures and activities are of an appropriate quality and standard compared to similar committees at other Universities of which I am aware.
C7.	C7	This committee responds appropriately to data obtained on the quality of its policies, procedures and activities.
C8.	C8	This committee has implemented appropriate follow-up mechanisms to evaluate the impact of its policies, procedures and activities.

Table 7. Breakdown of average committee evaluation ratings by specific committee for the 8 evaluations statements*.

Committee	C1**	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
Standing	5.0	1.0	5.0	1.0	3.5	5.0	2.5	1.0
	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(2)
Degrees & Programs	4.7	4.0	4.4	2.9	3.1	4.6	3.9	3.3
	(9)	(9)	(9)	(7)	(7)	(5)	(7)	(7)
Research Doctoral	5.6	5.3	5.3	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.7	5.0
	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(2)
Research	4.0	3.8	4.0	2.4	3.3	4.8	3.5	2.0
	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)
Postgraduate Scholarships	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.0	5.5	5.0	4.5
	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
Teaching & Learning	4.5	4.0	4.0	2.9	3.1	4.8	3.7	3.3
	(8)	(8)	(8)	(7)	(7)	(4)	(7)	(7)
Promotions (any Level)	5.3	5.5	4.5	5.7	4.0	5.0	5.5	5.7
	(4)	(2)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(3)	(2)	(3)
Study Leave	6.0	5.5	4.5	4.0	3.0	5.7	5.0	4.5
	(3)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(2)	(2)
Admissions	4.5	4.5	4.8	3.7	5.5	5.0	4.3	4.0
	(4)	(4)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(3)
Tenure	5.5	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0		
	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)		
Promotion Appeals	6.0		3.0		3.0		6.0	3.0
	(1)		(1)		(1)		(1)	(1)

* The content of the eight evaluation statements is reported in the table at the bottom of Figure 5.

** Cell contents are rating averages for committee evaluative statements with the number of respondents contributing to the average shown in parentheses in smaller font size.

References

- Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), 2002, *Auditor's Manual v1*, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne.
- University of New England, 2002, *The University of New England Handbook 2002*, University of New England, Armidale.
- Review Team, 2001, *Review of the Academic Board and the Academic Forum: Report of the Review Team*, University of Sydney, Sydney.
- Review Committee, 1996, *Review of the Academic Board: Report of the Review Committee*, University of New England, Armidale.