

**AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES
QUALITY AGENCY LIMITED**

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2007 - 2012

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1. Introduction

AUQA has reached a significant stage in its development. The first cycle of audits of universities, other self-accrediting institutions, and accrediting agencies is coming to an end and a new approach is being developed for Cycle 2. AUQA is also taking on the auditing of other higher education institutions, and is increasing its collaboration over TAFE activities. This Strategic Plan lays the groundwork for this next stage.

Following planning and preparation in 2001, including trial audits, the first substantive audits were carried out in 2002 and mid-2007 sees the completion of all AUQA's audits of the current Australian universities, other self-accrediting institutions and State and Territory accrediting agencies. There have been many other activities during this period in addition to the audits. AUQA has worked to assist institutions and accrediting agencies in quality enhancement, to provide advice on quality assurance to governments and other organisations, and to build active international collaborations with quality agencies elsewhere.

AUQA initiated and continues to support the annual Australian Universities Quality Forum (AUQF), the national conference on quality assurance in higher education. AUQA initiated, maintains and is extending the Good Practice Database (GPDB) of quality practices in Australian and New Zealand institutions. AUQA has made submissions to all relevant government inquiries, and written reports on quality assurance procedures in the Asia-Pacific region, Indigenous higher education, the extent of benchmarking in Australian universities, and the National Protocols for HE Approval Processes, among others. AUQA staff have, by invitation spoken at many conferences and to many institutions.

Internationally, AUQA has strong relations with many overseas agencies and provides a great deal of consulting in the form of advice, audit and training to many of them. Australia's extensive international engagement in education led AUQA to pay particular attention to transnational education in its audits, and this attention was further increased in 2005 at the request of, and funded by, the Federal government.

In 2005, AUQA conducted a major self-review, and in 2006 was subject to external review by an independent panel of members from Australia and overseas. The review was positive about AUQA's achievements, and made recommendations for future development.

As part of its planning for future activities, AUQA has, since the middle of 2005, been consulting on the changes it should make in its second audit cycle. The decision on the form of second cycle audits was made by AUQA's shareholding body (the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education and Training, MCEETYA) in October 2006, and planning for their implementation has intensified from late in 2006 and will extend through most of 2007.

Australia has a group of HE institutions that are subject to external accreditation by various agencies, and hence are designated 'non self-accrediting institutions' (NSAIs).

A large number of these are now eligible to benefit from Federal funds, and must therefore be audited. AUQA has begun this new task in 2006. It will continue in 2007 and 2008, and will become a large task in 2009-2012.

MCEETYA has also approved revised objectives for AUQA. These include new dimensions for audit and but recognise and clarify work already being done by AUQA. Giving these a sharper focus in line with the revised objectives will have financial implications.

In the light of the above, a Strategic Plan beginning in 2007 speaks to a revised approach to auditing SAs and agencies, auditing NSAs, auditing some TAFE activities, and possibly auditing some other overseas VET activities.

In addition to internal considerations, the Plan is written in the context of the following environmental factors:

- Current and increasing diversity of institutions
- Introduction of the Research Quality Framework (RQF)
- The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) and its changing parameters
- Revised National Protocols for HE Approval Processes
- VET/HE convergence in relation to QA, including changes in AQTF with implications for dual-sector institutions and agencies
- Transnational Quality Strategy
- The Federal Labor Party's 2006 'white paper' with its proposal for an Australian Higher Education Quality Agency
- Increased public comment on educational outcome standards, and a consequent increased emphasis on measuring standards
- Re-focusing of Australian transnational (TN) / cross-border (CB) activities, including a reported reduction in the number of partnership operations.
- Globalisation / internationalisation and its effect on institutions and their international work, and its implications for AUQA's international liaison
- International changes that may affect (positively or negatively) the Australian HE sector
- International comparisons and rankings

Attention to these factors is embedded in the actions arising from this Plan.

Associated Plans

Action Plan:

Specific actions for each strategy, updated annually.

Staffing Plan:

Current staff profile and skills matched against needed profile and skills

Business Development Plan:

Systematic approach to increasing consulting income

2. Mission, Objectives, Vision, Values

AUQA's Mission

AUQA is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education with the responsibility of providing public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and assisting in enhancing the academic quality of these institutions.

AUQA's Objectives

AUQA is established to be the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education, with responsibility for quality audits of higher education institutions and accreditation authorities, reporting on performance and outcomes, assisting in quality enhancement, advising on quality assurance; and liaising internationally with quality agencies in other jurisdictions, for the benefit of Australian higher education.

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

- 1 Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of:
 - the quality of the academic activities, including attainment of standards of performance and outcomes of Australian universities and other higher education institutions;
 - the quality assurance arrangements intended to maintain and elevate that quality;
 - compliance with criteria set out in the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes;and monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on the quality of outcomes in Australian universities and higher education institutions.
- 2 Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of the quality assurance processes, procedures, and outcomes of State, Territory and Commonwealth higher education accreditation authorities including their impact on the quality of higher education programs; and monitor, review, analyse and report on the outcomes of those audits.
- 3 Publicly report periodically on matters relating to quality assurance, including the relative standards and outcomes of the Australian higher education system and its institutions, its processes and its international standing, and the impact of the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes on Australian Higher Education, using information available to AUQA from its audits and other activities carried out under these Objectives, and from other sources.

- 4 Develop partnerships with other quality agencies in relation to matters directly relating to quality assurance and audit, to facilitate efficient cross-border quality assurance processes and the international transfer of knowledge about those processes.

AUQA's Vision

To consolidate AUQA's position as the leading reference point for quality assurance in higher education in and for Australia. Specifically:

- AUQA's judgements will be widely recognised as objective, accurate and useful, based on its effective procedures, including auditor training and thorough investigation.
- AUQA's work will be recognised by institutions and accrediting agencies as adding value to their activities, through the emphasis on autonomy, diversity and self-review.
- Through AUQA's work, there will be an improvement in public knowledge of the relative academic standards of Australian higher education and an increase in public confidence in Australian higher education.
- Through AUQA's work with other quality assurance agencies, the international quality assurance requirements for Australian higher education institutions will be coherent and rigorous, avoiding duplication and inconsistency.
- AUQA's advice will be sought on quality assurance in higher education, through mechanisms including consulting, training and publications.
- AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency, collaborating with other agencies and providing leadership by example.

AUQA's Values

External: how we relate to other people and organisations

AUQA will be:

Rigorous: AUQA carries out all its audits as rigorously and thoroughly as possible.

Supportive: AUQA recognises institutional autonomy in setting objectives and implementing processes to achieve them, and acts to facilitate and support this.

Flexible: AUQA operates flexibly, in order to acknowledge and reinforce institutional diversity, and is responsive to institution and agency characteristics and needs.

Co-operative: AUQA recognises that the achievement of quality in any organisation depends on a commitment to quality within the organisation itself, and so operates as unobtrusively as is consistent with effectiveness and rigour.

Collaborative: as a quality assurance agency, AUQA works collaboratively with the accrediting agencies (in addition to its audit role with respect to these agencies).

Transparent: AUQA's audit procedures, and its own quality assurance system, are open to public scrutiny.

Economical: AUQA operates cost-effectively and keeps as low as possible the demands it places on institutions and agencies.

Open: AUQA reports publicly and clearly on its findings in relation to institutions, agencies and the sector.

Internal: how we behave as an organisation

Staff are:

- Mutually supportive
- Committed to higher education and its quality
- Thorough in what we do
- Economical in the way we operate
- Internationally oriented and aware
- Constantly alert for and act on possibilities for improvement

Summary

- The *Mission* says what AUQA is,
- the *Objectives* specify what AUQA does,
- the *Vision* sets out how well to do it,
- the *Values* are how to behave while doing it, and
- the KPIs measure how well we do it.

3. Stakeholders

The term 'stakeholder' is generally taken to mean an entity that is directly affected. In this sense, any organisation working in education has many stakeholders, as everyone is affected by education. AUQA is no exception, and has many groups of stakeholders. Furthermore, there are other entities and individuals that are not directly affected but are interested in or wish to collaborate with AUQA.

Major Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders are:

- Auditees
- Students of auditee institutions, and student associations
- Staff of auditee institutions, and staff associations
- Members (ie the ministers responsible for higher education)
- The general public

Other Stakeholders

Other stakeholders that use the results of AUQA's audits in some way include:

- IDP Education Australia
- Australian Education International
- The media
- Australasian Council for Auditors General (ACAG)
- Australia-Pacific Ombudsman Institute
- Professional associations
- Quality agencies in other countries
- HE institutions in other countries
- Other governments

Other Collaborators

Other collaborators include:

- Peak bodies in higher education (AVCC/Universities Australia, AQFAB, ACPET, COPHE, etc).
- The Carrick Institute
- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
- Graduate Careers Australia (GCA)
- Other quality agencies
- INQAAHE, APQN and other quality networks
- Business associations

AUQA staff have specific identified responsibility for maintaining contact with as many of these groups and to as great an extent as time and opportunity permit.

4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Each of the four *Objectives* in AUQA's Constitution has at least one KPI associated with it.

AUQA's *Vision* relates to how well the *Objectives* are implemented, and AUQA's resulting reputation. Each *Vision* point also has associated KPIs.

KPIs, are monitored and the results recorded.

Objectives

<i>Objective</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Target</i>
<p>1. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the academic activities, including attainment of standards of performance and outcomes of Australian universities and other higher education institutions; • the quality assurance arrangements intended to maintain and elevate that quality; • compliance with criteria set out in the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes; <p>and monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on the quality of outcomes in Australian universities and higher education institutions.</p>	<p>1. Number of audits per year</p> <p>2. Auditee requests for review of audit report</p> <p>3. Timeliness of audit reports.</p>	<p>1. As per audit schedule</p> <p>2. Nil</p> <p>3. Within target.</p>
<p>2. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of the quality assurance processes, procedures, and outcomes of State, Territory and Commonwealth higher education accreditation authorities including their impact on the quality of higher education programs; and monitor, review, analyse and report on the outcomes of those audits.</p>	<p>1. Audits carried out</p> <p>2. Auditee requests for review of audit report</p> <p>3. Timeliness of audit reports.</p>	<p>1. All jurisdictions audited by the end of 2012</p> <p>2. Nil</p> <p>3. Within target.</p>

<i>Objective</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Target</i>
<p>3. Publicly report periodically on matters relating to quality assurance, including the relative standards and outcomes of the Australian higher education system and its institutions, its processes and its international standing, and the impact of the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes on Australian Higher Education, using information available to AUQA from its audits and other activities carried out under these Objectives, and from other sources.</p>	<p>1. Production of reports 2. Media coverage.</p>	<p>1. At least two report produced each year 2. At least five media items per audit report.</p>
<p>4. Develop partnerships with other quality agencies in relation to matters directly relating to quality assurance and audit, to facilitate efficient cross-border quality assurance processes and the international transfer of knowledge about those processes.</p>	<p>1. Number of MoCs with other agencies. 2. Outcomes of MoCs and other partnerships.</p>	<p>1. One identifiable partnership outcome per year 2. Partnership outcome has tangible benefits to Australian HEIs and/or the HE sector.</p>

Vision

Vision	KPI	Measure	
			Target
1. AUQA's judgements will be widely recognised as objective, accurate and useful, based on its effective procedures, including auditor training and thorough investigation.	1.1	Percentage of recommendations & affirmations accepted / acted on	85%
	1.2	Number of hits on audit reports	Trends stable or rising
	1.3	Views of a range of organisations	Broad satisfaction
2. AUQA's work will be recognised by institutions and accrediting agencies as adding value to their activities, through the emphasis on autonomy, diversity and self-review.	2.1	Aggregate of auditee survey results	1 to 2 on a 5-point scale
3. Through AUQA's work, there will be an improvement in public knowledge of the relative academic standards of Australian higher education and an increase in public confidence in Australian higher education.	3.1	Change in awareness of AUQA (and Australian HE QA processes more generally) over the cycle	Increase in number of media references
	3.2	Change in attitudes to / awareness of standards of Australian HE over the cycle	Positive

Vision	KPI		Measure
			Target
4. Through AUQA's work with other quality assurance agencies, the international quality assurance requirements for Australian higher education institutions will be coherent and rigorous, avoiding duplication and inconsistency.	4.1	Problems arising from overseas educational partnerships	Decreasing
	4.2	Simplification or reduction of requirements on institutions through AUQA's work with overseas agencies	One per year
5. AUQA's advice will be sought on quality assurance in higher education, through mechanisms including consulting, training and publications.	5.1	Number of national approaches for advice or consulting; invitations to give national talks and keynote addresses	10 p.a.
	5.2	Number of hits on - good practices in the GPDB - Audit Manual	Access trends stable or rising
	5.3	Workshop/seminar/AUQF attender survey results	positive

Vision	KPI		Measure
			Target
6. AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency, collaborating with other agencies and providing leadership by example.	6.1	Number of international approaches for advice, audit, consulting, etc., including visiting international general delegations; invitations to give international talks, etc	10 p.a.
	6.2	Number of international requests to observe audits or for attachment to AUQA	4 p.a.
7. Other	7.1	Annual financial result (be aware of costs to owners - Members - & auditees)	within budget
	7.2	Board member self-review – comparison with other boards	Positive & improving
	7.3	Staff satisfaction	Positive & improving

5 Strategies

Strategy 1

Establish and implement Cycle 2 audits for institutions.
(Objectives 1 and 2)

Strategy 2

Establish and implement NSAI/HEP audits.
(Objectives 1 & 2)

Strategy 3

Prepare and carry out AUQA's role in relation to the revised National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes.
(Objective 3)

Strategy 4

Develop and implement Cycle 2 audits for agencies.
(Objectives 1, 2 & 3)

Strategy 5

(Continue to) contribute to the enhancement of quality in higher education.
(All objectives)

Strategy 6

(Continue) AUQA's international engagement, including further development and enhancement of relations with QA agencies (QAAs) in other countries.
(Objective 5)

Strategy 7

(Continue to) Develop an active program of research and publication
(Objectives 3, 4)

Strategy 8

Develop staff, increase income, strengthen IT and other facilities
(all objectives)

The strategic priorities are as follows.

By the end of 2007:

- Establish cycle 2 audits for institutions (S1).
- Establish NSAI/HEP audits (S2).
- Prepare to carry out AUQA's role in relation to the revised Protocols (S3).

By the end of 2008:

- Develop approach to cycle 2 audits for agencies (S4).

Continuing:

- Quality enhancement (S5).
- International work, with INQAAHE, APQN and individual QA agencies (S6).
- Research (S7).
- Prepare to carry out any new role for AUQA emerging from any other national proposals, such as VET/HE interactions, TQS, etc.

Internal priorities are to increase financial resources, and increase and re-focus human resources (S8).

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