

November 2006

# AUQA News

A Quarterly Newsletter on the Activities of AUQA

Australian Universities Quality Agency

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## 1. Audit Update

### Progress Reports

Audit Progress Reports from the first audit cycle are being added progressively to the AUQA website. Since August, progress reports have been added for Charles Sturt and Deakin Universities. As well, the University of Tasmania has provided a link to its audit implementation plan. Progress Reports are accessible at [http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai\\_reports/index.shtml](http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai_reports/index.shtml).

## 2. AUQA Audit Cycle 2

Approval has recently been given by the Members of AUQA (the ministers responsible for higher education) for the approach to the second cycle of AUQA audits. An overview is below.



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A briefing meeting will be held for SAIs on **13 December 2006** and for agencies early next year. The sector will be involved in further planning of the implementation during the first half of next year and the first audit visits will be held in 2008.

*The following advice was distributed by AUQA in early November 2006.*

## **Overview of Audit Cycle 2**

### **Context**

In 2007, AUQA will finish auditing the current self-accrediting institutions (SAIs) and the accreditation agencies. From 2008, it will begin a second cycle of audits of these bodies (as well as auditing some institutions for the first time).

Suggestions for cycle 2 were sought and received from AUQA's constituency and via the review of AUQA. In deciding what to recommend to the AUQA Members on the nature of cycle 2, the Board of AUQA set out to achieve a balance between two objectives. On the one hand, it is important for the next audits to be sufficiently similar to the first ones to help to bed down QA processes and reinforce aspects that have become established in internal institutional processes, and because the system has proved to be effective. On the other hand, it is important for successive audit cycles to be different to avoid staleness, complacency and diminishing returns, to recognise the changing character of the system and the institutions, and to emphasise continuing improvement.

Detailed processes and advice for cycle 2 will be further developed by AUQA, informed by national briefing sessions with SAIs and Higher Education Recognition Officers and a sector-based reference group.

### **Cycle 2 Audits — Main Similarities to Cycle 1**

- A fitness *for* purpose audit against institutional / agency objectives (recognising diversity of SAIs and consistency between agencies)
- An emphasis on quality enhancement / improvement
- Use of the ADRI framework
- Audit reports containing Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations
- Acknowledgement of the benefit and importance of self-review
- Avoidance of ranking systems
- Attention to international activities
- Good practices shared through mechanisms such as AUQA's Good Practice Database
- Approximately six-year audit cycle for SAIs

### **Cycle 2 Audits — Main Differences from Cycle 1**

#### **Update:**

- "Closing the loop" on recommendations and affirmations from cycle 1 audits
- Overview of main quality assurance procedures, with emphasis on changes since cycle 1.
- Streamline (and attempt to reduce) documentation.

#### **Standards, Benchmarking and Outcomes:**

- The fitness for purpose approach will explicitly encompass standards, performance and outcomes, guided by consideration of academic risk and its management.

- Greater emphasis on institutional standards and performance outcomes, with attention to benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes.
- Audits will investigate how academic standards are determined, applied, maintained, monitored and met.
- Greater use of external reference points.
- Evidence of the relation between processes and outcomes will be sought.

#### **Audit Depth:**

- Identification of two thematic areas for detailed attention.

#### **Audit Reports:**

- Recommendations and affirmations in audit reports, identifying areas requiring action, will be prioritised on a three or four-point scale (eg high, medium, low), as advice to the auditee.

#### **Agencies:**

- Agencies will be audited in 2010.

### **3. AUQA's Objectives**

The external review of AUQA recommended some revision of AUQA's objectives, to make them more precise and to include reference to quality improvement, research and international activities already being done by AUQA, which the review panel commended. A revised set of objectives is being considered by MCEETYA's Joint Committee on Higher Education. The change in objectives will not have major effect on the planning for cycle 2, as the agreed approach is consistent with both the current and proposed revised objectives.

### **4. Board News**

The Board of AUQA held its third meeting for 2006 on 5 September. The final Board meeting for 2006 will be held on 28 November.

#### **Auditor Vetting and Planning Sub-Committee**

The Board has established a sub-committee, the Auditor Vetting and Planning Sub-Committee to consider nominations to the Register of Auditors and to recommend potential auditors to the Board. The Sub-Committee is considering the profile of auditors that AUQA will require for the next two years, taking into account the likely mix of skills needed for cycle 2 and NSAI audits.

### **5. AUQA Staff News**

Audit Director **Martin Carroll**, who has been on secondment in 2006 to the Oman Accreditation Council, has extended his period of secondment until July 2007.

**Davina Sutton-Driscoll**, part-time administration assistant, left AUQA in October. We thank her for her excellent contribution to AUQA and wish her all the best in her new opportunity.

## 6. Auditor Meetings and Workshops

### **Auditor Training Workshop — 20 and 21 November 2006**

AUQA's annual Auditor Training Workshop will be held in Melbourne on 20 and 21 November. Currently, eleven new AUQA auditors are registered for the Workshop. The Workshop is also open to fee-paying delegates.

AUQA is grateful to a number of auditors who have kindly agreed to speak at the workshop: Professor Joyce Kirk, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) at RMIT, will give a presentation on the audit experience; Professor Barbara van Ernst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) at Swinburne University of Technology, will discuss auditing teaching and learning; and Ian Marshman, Senior Vice-Principal at the University of Melbourne, will talk about university governance requirements.

The full program is available at: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityenhancement/workshops/index.shtml>.

### **Report: Quality Audit Training Program for Victorian HEAC & HE&RD**

Nine members of the Victorian Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC), six members of staff from the Higher Education and Regulation Division (HE&RD), and two observers (one from DEST and one from SA DFEEEST), attended a training workshop organised by AUQA on 19 October. The workshop was initiated by Terry Stokes, Director HE&R, and Sian Lewis, Manager HE&R, to prepare Victoria for the pilot quality audit of a non-self-accrediting Higher Education Provider under the Commonwealth *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. Staff from both AUQA and the Queensland Office of Higher Education facilitated discussions and evaluations showed the workshop achieved its objectives.

## 7. Follow up to AUQF2006 *Quality Outcomes and Diversity*

As reported in the last newsletter, AUQF2006 included a panel discussion on 'Student Surveys and Student Engagement'. The session was chaired by Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee and the speakers were Dr Hamish Coates, ACER Australia, Mr Mike Prosser, Director Research and Evaluation, The Higher Education Academy in the UK, and Professor George Kuh, Indiana University Bloomington, USA. Following the presentation, the chair continued the discussion with the speakers online. The speakers' reflections on the additional questions raised, together with additional sources of information, are available at: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2006/student/index.htm>.

## 8. AUQF2007 – Call for Contributions

AUQF2007 will take place in Hobart on 11–13 July 2007. The Call for Contributions has been issued, with a closing date of **12 March 2007**. Details are available on the AUQF2007 website at <http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2007/contributions/index.htm>.

The Forum theme is '**Evolution and Renewal in Quality Assurance**' and sub-themes are:

- Integration of Quality Assurance Systems: Converging Pathways?
- Impact of Quality Audit
- Changing Approaches and Attitudes
- Benchmarking
- International Collaboration in Quality Assurance
- Qualitative Data and Quality Outcomes.

## 9. AUQA Publications

The following new AUQA Occasional Publications are now available on the AUQA website:

- *Serving the Cause of Indigenous Issues: Thematic Analysis of the Institutional Audit Reports of AUQA* (Antony Stella and David Woodhouse)
- *Proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality Forum 2006: Quality Outcomes & Diversity*
- *Quality Frameworks: Reflections from Australian Universities* (ed. Jeanette Baird).

## 10. Good Practice Database

A further 21 new GPDB entries are being prepared for release in November 2006, with practices submitted by: the University of Melbourne; University of New South Wales; University of Wollongong; Queensland Department of Education and the Arts; Department of Education Services, Western Australia; and Central Queensland University. The entries cover topics including Indigenous issues, IT and library, governance, community engagement, and research and consultancy.

### **AUQA collaborates with GUNI on the Good Practice Database**

The Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) is composed of UNESCO Chairs in Higher Education, research centers, universities, networks and other institutions highly committed to innovation in higher education. Over 100 institutions from around the world are GUNI members. The mission of GUNI is to contribute to the reinforcement of higher education worldwide, by putting into practice the decisions adopted at the World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) held in Paris in 1998.

The Observatory of Good University Practices identifies innovative experiences designed to promote social commitment in higher education. Good practices are disseminated and published online on the Observatory's website.

GUNI and AUQA have agreed to explore a collaborative arrangement, stemming from the GUNI Observatory's wish to build networks that contribute to social commitment in higher education all over the world. Initially, the collaboration between AUQA and GUNI will be focused on the transfer of information, the linking of websites and dissemination of activities. In relation to this last point, AUQA's Good Practice Database will be featured at the 3rd International Barcelona Conference on Higher Education 'Accreditation for Quality Assurance: What is at Stake' to be held by GUNI on 27–29 November 2006. Audit Director Dr Antony Stella will present a report on quality assurance developments in the Asia-Pacific and a workshop on the GPDB.

## 11. Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN)

*Liesha Northover, APQN Administrator*

### Membership

Since the last newsletter APQN has welcomed five new members. APQN now has 17 full members, seven intermediate members and 13 associate members from 23 different countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Forty additional applications are currently in progress.

### Upcoming Event: Lahore, Pakistan

The First International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education (ICAQHE) 2006 will be hosted by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), among others, in Lahore, Pakistan. The conference will take place on 11–13 December 2006. The theme of the conference is 'Prosperity through Quality Education' and the official conference website is at <http://www.icaqhe2007.org.pk/#>.

### Upcoming Event: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The next APQN Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) is being hosted by Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (National Accreditation Board) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 4–7 February 2007. The theme of the conference is 'Emerging Challenges, Emerging Practices: Sharing a Global Vision of Quality Assurance in Higher Education'. Registration for the event is US\$350.00 and details are available at <http://www.apqn.org/events/>. The Call for Contributions document was issued on 31 October 2006 and is available on request from Liesha Northover ([apqn@auqa.edu.au](mailto:apqn@auqa.edu.au)).

### Past Event: India

The conference 'Student Participation in Quality Enhancement', hosted by the Indian National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), took place in Bangalore on 16–17 September 2006. Representatives from Pakistan, Thailand, Mongolia, Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam attended. Two additional delegates, from Scotland and Australia, were supported by APQN in a training capacity. The conference poem, conference report, overview, photo album, presentations and program are all available on the APQN website at <http://www.apqn.org/events/past/>.



*Dr Antony Stella, Professor G Haragopal and B. S. Ponmudiraj at the Student Participation in Quality Enhancement conference*

APQN online presentations are available for most past events at <http://www.apqn.org/events/past/>.

### **Staff Movement**

As part of the World Bank funding agreement, APQN is committed to facilitating regional staff movement activities. To date, ten people from five different countries/territories have been or will be involved in such activities. More details are at: [http://www.apqn.org/services/staff\\_movement/](http://www.apqn.org/services/staff_movement/).

## **12. Visitors to AUQA and Other Meetings**

Visitors to AUQA between August and early November have included: the Malaysian Minister of Education and officials; a high-level officials delegation from Indonesia; a delegation from the Bangladesh High Commission; Sir Colin Lucas; Mr Paul Henderson, the Northern Territory Minister for Employment, Education and Training; and Senior Locally Engaged Staff from Australian Education International.

A number of international academics and officials will spend some time at AUQA in November and December as part of study tours and professional development activities. In September, Ms Hailey Lam, Acting Registrar with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA), visited AUQA for a professional development placement.

Presentations given by AUQA staff and attendance at meetings include: auditor training at NAAC, India, (Antony Stella); a two-day UNESCO Government of India Workshop on Regulation in Cross-Border Higher Education (Antony Stella); a presentation to American university administrators (David Woodhouse); and an address to the 2006 National Colloquium of Academic Boards/Senates (David Woodhouse).