

**Australian Universities Quality Agency Ltd
ACN 092 938 200**

**AUQA Board Meeting 2009/2
10.00am Thursday 21 May 2009**

**AUQA Board Room
Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000**

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Present

Emeritus Professor Deryck Schreuder (Chair of the Board)
Mr Ian Hawke (Deputy Chair of the Board)
Professor Jeanette Hackett
Emeritus Professor Michael Koder (from 11.15am)
Professor Bill Lovegrove
Professor Ian O'Connor
Mr Terry Werner
Dr David Woodhouse (Executive Director)

Observers: Carolyn Allport, Rob Carmichael (note taker for this meeting), Mark Hay, Karen Treloar; Fiona Buffington (DEEWR) (from 11.25am).

Apologies: Dr Gael Fraser, Professor Alan Pettigrew

Board Secretary: Dr Antony Stella (till 12.15pm)

The meeting started at 10.00 hrs with a welcome by the Chair to all Directors and especially new Directors. (Fog at airports delayed the arrival of some members.) A question was raised whether the paper proposing new auditors for appointment (item AB2009/2/4.5) had been distributed. The Executive Director explained that it had not, and the Board would be asked to agree appropriate action under that item.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING 2009/1 HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2009

The Board **confirmed** the Minutes of meeting AB2009/1 held on 17 February 2009 as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. THE AGENDA

3.1 Approval of the Agenda and items to be starred; **approval** of all un-starred items

Items that were deemed to require discussion had been starred on the Agenda. Directors were invited to indicate if they wished to change the status of any items. After considering all updates and the additional papers

provided, the following items were starred for explicit attention: 4.3, 4.5, 5.2, 6 and 8. The Board agreed to consider a recently received discussion paper from the AQF Council under item 6.

On a motion from the Chair, the Board **agreed** to the actions recommended in the other papers, and they were deemed to have the approval of the Board.

3.2 Matters arising not listed elsewhere on the agenda

The Chair extended a welcome to new and returning Directors. The Executive Director advised that nominations for the Directors appointed by the Commonwealth had not yet been completed, although DEEWR had advised informally that Fiona Buffington, General Manager, HE Branch, would be nominated. The Chair had therefore invited her to attend this meeting as an observer, and that her arrival had been delayed by fog.

4 AUDIT MATTERS

4.1 Audits 2008

The Board **received** a report on the 2008 audit program, including the Executive Director's response to the analysis of all 2008 audit reports carried out by Professor Alex Radloff.

4.2 Audits 2009

The Board **received** a report on the 2009 audit program.

4.3 Audit Schedule 2010 Onwards

The Board received a report on the national audit schedule for 2010 onwards and discussion centred on concerns being expressed by some Government Accreditation Authorities (GAAs) that, because of the proposed establishment in 2010 of the 'Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency' (TEQSA), they should not be subject to audit by AUQA in that year. Directors were strongly of the view that the 2010 audits should proceed. but it was suggested the audits could be tailored to adopt a more prospective approach, focusing on good practices that would continue to be valuable in the TEQSA context. This would assist GAAs to identify and prioritise what was needed in order to prepare for the establishment of the TEQSA.

The Board **agreed** that the 2010 audits of GAAs by AUQA should proceed. They should be tailored to ensure that the audits add maximum value for both the GAAs and the establishment of TEQSA.

Action: ED

The Board **noted** that any changes to AUQA's current approach to the audits of GAAs (as approved by the Board at meeting AB2009/1) would need to be approved and communicated to the GAAs by about November this year. By then, more detailed information about the establishment of TEQSA should be available.

4.4 Progress Reports

The Board **received** a report on the progress reports submitted by the auditees since the previous meeting.

4.5 Auditors

The Board received an oral report on various matters relating to the screening and appointment of auditors to the Auditor Register. The Executive Director explained that the Board took the appointment of Auditors very seriously and had formed a sub-committee (AVPC) to vet nominations. However, in this particular instance there had been a problem over getting the papers to all members of the sub-committee prior to the meeting. The Executive Director therefore requested, and the Board **approved** the action items in paper AB2009/2/4.5, namely:

1. To **waive** the obtaining of referee reports for suitable candidates.
2. To **approve** the recommendations of the AVPC and **appoint** the recommended nominees to the AUQA Register of auditors, subject, in the case of Australian-based auditors, to attendance at auditor training.
3. To **appoint** a fourth member to the AVPC when the Board membership has been completed.

Action: ED

Action: Board

5. AUQA POLICY AND BOARD ISSUES

5.1 Risk Register

The Board **approved** the revisions to the Risk Register.

5.2 Standards in Australian Higher Education

The Board received a report on the work of the Advisory Group on Standards in HE which was appointed by the Board in September 2008. The AG has now released a consultation paper to a wide range of stakeholders in HE, business, the professions, and overseas. The Chair congratulated the Board its determination to move forward on the crucial standards issue.

Extensive general discussion centred on the value to the sector of the approach proposed by the Advisory Group. Directors' views on this varied considerably: from whether the approach was excessively bureaucratic and overly 'documentation dependent' (such as through the specification of subject standards at the discipline level), through to whether the approach to the specification and calibration of academic standards actually needed to be stronger than that being advocated, such as by recommending the universal adoption of external examiners. There was also a concern that attempts at setting discipline standards should take account of the evolving nature of knowledge and of its changing application in the professions.

From this discussion, several points of action emerged for which there was a broad level of support by Directors:

- The need to secure further 'engagement' from the academic community in moving the standards debate forward. It was agreed that this should include increasing the involvement of the academies in order to promote a discipline-based approach to standards;
- The need to have some timelines and strategies for project implementation, including a plan and a cost-benefit analysis, because of the need to address the resource implications of the work required, and in order to ensure that the current momentum can be sustained.

It was **agreed** that these aspects were more likely to be achieved by adoption of a two-phase engagement strategy:

1. The Advisory Group to complete the current 'paper-based' consultation process and report its findings to the Board for full consideration at AB2009/3 on 25 August; and
2. The increase of face-to-face consultations in which AUQA works with key stakeholder groups - such as the ALTC, the universities, and the discipline-based academies - in order to identify sample target disciplines, institutions, and professional academies in trialling an AUQA Board-endorsed approach to the QA of academic standards.

Action: ED

5.3 Report on KPIs

The Board **received** a report on the KPIs in the Strategic Plan, noting that all targets have been achieved.

5.4 Board membership

The Board **approved** the proposal to invite the National President of Council of Australian Post-graduate Associations (CAPA) to attend meetings of the AUQA Board as an observer.

Action: ED

6. HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW

The higher education review and related developments since the last Board meeting were discussed at some length. The Chair and the Executive Director introduced the topic by tracking the main recent developments; and the Chair then invited the DEEWR Observer, Fiona Buffington, to comment. It was stressed that all developments are subject to consultation and negotiation with the States and Territories. The Minister's intention to establish TEQSA as a new national statutory authority for higher education quality is clear, with the most likely timetable being a proposed establishment date of 1 July 2010, with 1 January 2011 as the date for the start-up of operations, and for TEQSA to be fully operational by 2012. In this context, Ms Buffington advised that she would be seeking an early determination from the Minister about continuation of AUQA staff and continuation of the QA

operation in Melbourne. There followed detailed consideration of the legal, structural, and administrative implications of this prospect.

The Chair concluded the discussion by returning to three main points:

1. That any new national quality assurance system should not lose the expertise that has been accumulated by AUQA and which is now available to the higher education sector because of the work of AUQA;
2. That Australia has now established a distinctive approach to handling QA in the higher education sector, and the momentum gathered by AUQA in Cycles 1 and 2, and through the AUQF, auditor training etc will be valuable in the new arrangements; and finally,
3. That in the establishment of a new and expanded national quality assurance body, AUQA would welcome the opportunity to be part of any design and development panel that is established, and draw from its accumulated knowledge base in order to assist with the development of the new agency.

The Board then **approved** the following statement for public release:

“AUQA welcomes the announcement of the formation of TEQSA and the intent to have a more coherent and unified external quality system for higher education. AUQA looks forward to working with the Federal and other governments, and the higher education institutions, to develop and implement the new system, building on the achievements and reputation of AUQA that have been established over the last ten years.”

The AQFC has released a discussion document on the revision of the national Qualifications Framework. This was received by some directors, just the day before the meeting.

The Executive Director drew the Board’s attention to the need for AUQA to respond to the AQFC consultation paper, ‘Strengthening the AQF’. Responses are due at AQFC by Friday June 12. The Executive Director stated that he would be pleased to receive any comments by Directors in advance of that date.

Action: Directors

7. FINANCE MATTERS

The Board **received** the Financial Report for the three months to 31 March 2009.

8. CHAIR’S REPORT

The Chair reported on his and the Executive Director’s continuing dialogue with Education Ministers and their chiefs of staff, and on invitations received from other stakeholder groups such as Universities Australia, Chancellors, and DVCs to address them on AUQA matters in this transitional period.

With respect to AUQA housekeeping, the Chair congratulated the Executive Director on his recent re-election to the position of President of INQAAHE. The Chair also reminded Directors of the membership of the Remuneration Committee, consisting of himself, the Deputy Chair of the Board, the Chair of the Finance Committee, and one additional Director, to be invited in order for the Committee to

meet prior to the 25 August meeting of the Board and report on the annual 'Performance Review' for the Executive Director.

9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

After the Executive Director explained the purpose of his report for the benefit of new members and observers, the Board **received** a report from the Executive Director on AUQA activities.

10. MCEETYA / DEEWR MATTERS

The Board **noted** a report on MCEETYA matters, including progress on the appointment of new members by the Commonwealth.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other items of business raised by Directors

12. 2009 BOARD MEETING DATES

25 August 2009

24 November 2009