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**Learning and Teaching in Australian Universities
A thematic analysis of Cycle 1 AUQA Audits**

**Christine Ewan
for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council**

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Report Contents

Introduction	3
The Author: Christine Ewan	2
1. Executive Summary	3
1.1 Learning and Teaching Plans.....	3
1.2 Program or Course Development and Approval.....	4
1.3 Program or Course Review	10
1.4 Administrative and Committee Structure	5
1.5 Support and Incentives for Staff	5
1.6 Graduate Attributes	6
1.7 Assessment.....	6
1.8 Consistency Across Multiple Campuses	6
1.9 Assessment and Academic Integrity	7
1.10 Academic Benchmarking.....	7
1.11 Academic Quality Assurance.....	8
1.12 Future Directions	8
2. Introduction	11
2.1 Scope of Thematic Review.....	11
2.2 Overview of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations	11
3. Managing Teaching and Learning Quality	13
3.1 Strategic Plans	13
3.1.1 Do Strategic Plans Effectively Address Teaching and Learning?	13
3.2 Teaching and Learning Plans and Policies	14
3.2.1 Communicating the Plan.....	14
3.2.2 Components of the Plan.....	14
3.2.3 Alignment	15
3.2.4 Benefits of Audit.....	16
3.3 Structures and Mechanisms to Support the Teaching and Learning Plan	17
3.3.1 Typical Structures	17
3.3.2 Linking Academic Planning with Resource Planning.....	18
3.3.3 Institutional Policies and Their Implementation	19
3.3.4 Linking Teaching and Learning Plans with Research.....	19
3.3.5 Support for Staff.....	20
3.3.6 Recognising and Rewarding Good Teaching	20
4. Program Approval and Review	22
4.1 Program Approval.....	22
4.1.1 External Input.....	22
4.1.2 Components of Program Proposals.....	22
4.1.3 Approvals Processes	22
4.2 Course Review	23
4.2.1 Review Policies.....	23
4.2.2 Compliance with Requirements for Review	24
4.2.3 Role of Professional Accreditation of Programs	25
4.2.4 Feedback Loop	25
4.2.5 Multicampus and Devolved Institutions.....	26



5. Graduate Attributes.....	27
5.1 Implementation	27
5.1.1 Awareness	27
5.1.2 Embedding Attributes in Curricula	28
5.1.3 Generic Versus Discipline-Specific Attributes.....	28
5.1.4 Student Awareness of the Benefits of Explicit Graduate Attributes.....	29
5.1.5 Mapping Graduate Attributes	30
6. Policies and Mechanisms to Oversee Assessment	32
6.1 Policies to Guide Assessment Practice	32
6.1.1 Consistency Across Multiple Campuses.....	34
6.1.2 External Cross-Location Marking or Moderation	35
6.1.3 Assessment and Academic Integrity.....	35
7. Academic Benchmarking and Quality Assurance.....	37
7.1 Current benchmarking activities	37
7.2 Developmental Trends in Benchmarking.....	38
7.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms	38
7.3.1 Quality Assurance for International Education.....	39
8. Conclusion.....	40
Appendix 1: Cycle 1 AUQA Audit Reports.....	42
Appendix 2: Commendations from AUQA Good Practice Database.....	43



Introduction

The complementary relationship between the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and the Australian Universities Quality Agency is reflected in this document, which we are pleased to publish jointly.

The Australian Teaching and Learning Council (ALTC) is dedicated to improving the student learning experience by supporting quality teaching and practice. ALTC works with higher education institutions, discipline groups and individuals as a collaborative and supportive partner in change, providing access to a network of knowledge, ideas and people.

The Australian Universities Quality Agency 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.

There are obvious synergies between the work of ALTC and AUQA. Projects funded by ALTC allow academics in higher education to address a wide range of topics, often problematic, in learning and teaching. Outcomes for these projects, which usually bring together a 'state of the art' reflection and include advice on good practice, are disseminated by ALTC and across higher education institutions. The adoption of improvements to learning and teaching practice in individual institutions is then likely to be reviewed through AUQA quality audits, reinforcing the ways in which the sector is collectively working to enhance its performance.

ALTC and AUQA cooperate in other ways, including cross-representation on working parties and committees, such as AUQA's Advisory Group on Academic Standards in Australian Higher Education. We expect that this spirit of cooperation will continue. The current worldwide attention to academic standards and student learning outcomes reinforces the need for further work in Australia.

AUQA approached ALTC to undertake a thematic analysis of findings from AUQA's first audit cycle relating to learning and teaching. ALTC offered its support for the analysis and asked Christine Ewan to undertake the project.

Beginning with this analysis, the publication goes on to draw out some general guidance for the Australian higher education sector on good practice and key topics for future assessments of institutional performance in learning and teaching.

AUQA thanks Christine Ewan for preparing this document on behalf of ALTC and AUQA, a process which required a substantial amount of review and analysis.

We hope that all those involved in Australian higher education will find the publication both useful and timely.

Richard Johnstone, ALTC

David Woodhouse, AUQA



The author: Christine Ewan

Christine Ewan has degrees in Medicine, Anthropology and Education and extensive experience in higher education teaching and learning policy and practice. She is an Emeritus Professor of the University of Wollongong and has been a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor responsible for academic programs, learning support, academic quality assurance and teaching and learning. She was awarded an AM for contributions in this area in the Illawarra. Christine has also worked in the NSW Government Senior Executive Service as General Manager, Planning & Innovation in the NSW Department of Education. She has authored numerous books and articles on higher education, especially in the health professions. She has also served on numerous national committees including the National Health & Medical Research Council and Australian Universities Teaching Committee and CUTSD the predecessors of ALTC. She is a trained AUQA auditor.



1. Executive Summary

This thematic study covers all 43 institutional reports prepared by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in the first round of institutional quality audits from October 2002 to November 2007 (see Appendix 1). Most, but not all, of these audits were of universities and the title of the publication uses the term 'universities' as reflecting the source of most of the comments below.

Specifically this study:

- identifies structures and mechanisms deployed by institutions to oversee curriculum design and review, assessment and academic benchmarking
- highlights collegial and management processes demonstrated as achieving, or being required to achieve, effective outcomes in these areas, and
- summarises sector-wide policies and practices in these areas.

It should be emphasised that this review describes practices and situations as they were at the time of the review which, in some cases, was six years prior to the writing of the review document. As such, it represents a summary of observations and lessons learned from reviews. It does not represent an accurate description of the way things are currently. The observations and recommendations made by the AUQA review panels have most likely been addressed by the institutions in the intervening period.

Observations made in this review are intended to act as an historical reference and as a guideline for focus in the current audit cycle.

It is clear that all Australian institutions have made significant progress in raising the profile of teaching and learning to its appropriate place as core activity. The large number of commendations made by audit panels, and affirmations for planned improvements, is testimony to the fact that virtually all institutions have made a genuine commitment to systems for ensuring teaching and learning quality.

Among the commendations, the clear majority related to recognition of exemplar projects and initiatives (these are highlighted in the body of this review), and to acknowledgement of those institutions that had developed robust quality assurance frameworks for learning and teaching that effectively aligned planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback of outcomes for improvement.

Audit report commendations related to teaching and learning have been summarised in Appendix 2. The commendations cover almost the full range of activity relevant to teaching and learning and offer examples of strategies that could be implemented by others across the sector.

1.1 Learning and Teaching Plans

Almost all institutions had developed a strategic plan as a framework for policy and resource allocation. Most included a general framework statement on mission, vision and principles, while specific educational policies were explicated in a learning and teaching plan. In some cases, the strategic plan was quite specific about the kind of student the institution caters for or the kind of educational outcomes the institution expects to produce. In a few cases, the plan was outcome-centred or employment-centred.

Typically, learning and teaching plans provided strategy and also more detailed educational policy. Most plans included the following elements although not all elements were present in all plans.



- policy on curriculum design and review
- assessment and plagiarism policies and procedures
- academic quality assurance policies and structures
- policies on use of technology and information services
- mechanisms for recognising and rewarding excellence
- statement of performance indicators and accountabilities
- acknowledgement of resource considerations, and
- approaches to academic benchmarking relevant to the institution's mission.

Where key elements such as performance indicators were absent, audit panels usually drew attention to the need for further development. Where plans included all elements (rarely) the audit panel may have mentioned this in commendations. More detail on the components of teaching and learning plans and examples are found in Section 3.2 of this review. In general, the majority of plans were deficient in closing the loop between aims, action, evaluation and improvement. Few had progressed beyond a statement of intent and policies for good academic governance and teaching process. Even those who attended to policies and processes of review and evaluation often neglected to build into their plans processes to ensure improvement based on outcome measurement. This signalled a need for more attention to indicator definition, outcome measurement and performance improvement in Cycle 2 audits.

Having a comprehensive plan is, however, no guarantee of its implementation. In a number of institutions many staff did not know the details of the plans or understand their implications. Sometimes, the complex logic underlying plans, strategies and operational details interfered with effective communication and implementation by staff. Even where institutional plans had been adopted at the faculty and school level, they sometimes lacked coherence or appropriate outcome measures.

The most common problem identified by audit panels was a weakness or failure in linking plans and policies to implementation and monitoring of effectiveness. Awareness and implementation of both strategic and learning and teaching plans at academic unit level was also often patchy within any given institution. This is perhaps not surprising in the first cycle of audits but could expect to be remedied in all institutions by the second round.

Panels also identified deficiencies in feedback loops, citing a lack of methods by which central bodies knew if there had been a breakdown in implementation of policies at school or individual level. This problem was exacerbated in multicampus institutions.

1.2 Program or Course Development and Approval

The usual, although not universal, practice in curriculum development was to appoint a course development committee and to seek external and/or professional input.

Course proposal templates were used by some institutions and, in examples of good practice, the process of curriculum or course development and review was supported by a well documented procedural manual. This practice was noted in a minority of institutions.

Usually proposals proceeded through faculty decision making to the academic governance body of the institution for final approval. In many cases the faculty boards and academic senates relied heavily on teaching and learning committees or similar bodies to ensure that all relevant policies were complied with as well as assure the quality of the proposal. In several institutions, an additional parallel process through a resource committee or vice-chancellor's advisory committee ensured that the proposal was consistent with the institution's priorities for its resource utilisation. In this regard, guidelines for course proposals often specified minimum enrolments. Regular reviews of course enrolments and viability were also commonplace.



1.3 Program or Course Review

In examples of good practice, program reviews required collection of data from a number of sources. These included: student evaluations of teachers and courses; national comparative data from the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), and similar datasets; measures of learning outcomes; views of expert external reviewers and employers, and trends in enrolments.

In some cases, audit panels commented on the lack of: an overview or policy structure for review schedules; comprehensive terms of reference for review panels; guidance on information for reviews; and processes for responding to review recommendations. For these reasons, some panels expressed a lack of confidence that review outcomes would be addressed in a consistent and systematic manner. Often the feedback loop was missing – while reviews were undertaken they might not have been used to bring about improvements and renewal in the courses reviewed.

Reviews were often carried out in response to local needs rather than in accordance with planned review schedules. Some institutions appeared to rely heavily on the accreditation processes of professional bodies to provide academic quality assurance. Panels noted that professional accreditation fulfils a very important function in the university's quality assurance system, providing an external validation against nationally (and sometimes internationally) benchmarked standards and thus comparability of standards across institutions. They emphasised, however, that accreditation should be complementary to, rather than a replacement for, an institution's own reviews of the quality of its programs.

To reinforce the need for independent validation of standards, audit panels frequently commented on the need for closer links among course review and quality assurance, self-assessment and external audit, and institutions' planning and benchmarking processes.

1.4 Administrative and Committee Structure

Institutional and/or faculty education committees appeared to be universal across all institutions.

In some institutions academic planning had been largely devolved to faculties; in others there was a much more centralised structure. In devolved institutions the need was recognised for stronger mechanisms for central guidance and feedback loops to provide more confidence in quality assurance across the entire institution. While this need was often pointed out by audit panels, in many cases the institutions themselves had acknowledged the need to improve this aspect in their portfolio statements.

As noted in section 1.2, the academic planning processes should be aligned in some way with the institution's resource planning processes. In the first cycle audits, such a link was not evident in the majority of cases.

Most universities lay claim to a research-teaching nexus in their academic climate but at the times of these audits, few had institutionalised the claim in policies or structures or evidence of outcomes.

1.5 Support and Incentives for Staff

Most institutions provide support for staff in teaching and learning through a specialised unit. These units vary in size and scope but most support some forms of flexible delivery and some form of induction for new teachers and ongoing development for experienced teachers. In many cases this took the form of optional academic programs such as graduate certificates or masters in higher education.



Several were commended for their approach to awards for excellence in teaching and their approaches to incorporating teaching performance in promotions procedures. It was evident that most institutions had implemented aspects of these initiatives but few reports mentioned it explicitly, possibly because it had become common practice.

1.6 Graduate Attributes

About 80 per cent of institutions had established a set of graduate attributes prior to the first cycle audits as an aid to curriculum design and assessment. In some cases, strategic decisions had been made to allow attributes to vary among faculties and schools and to differentiate between general abilities expected of all graduates and discipline specific attributes.

Graduate attributes were variously referred to as graduate qualities, graduate characteristics, graduate outcomes, core skills and generic skills. Although graduate attributes were defined in most cases, it was unusual to find explicit descriptions of the ways in which they were incorporated into the curriculum. Explicit assessment of outcomes in terms of graduate attributes was also not widespread but many institutions were in the process of addressing this deficit.

Often graduate attributes shared the fate of teaching and learning plans in that staff and students were not fully aware of them or their advantages.

1.7 Assessment

Ideally, an institution should have clear assessment policies that apply across all academic units. These policies should also be available and promoted to students as well as staff. Academic boards or senates need to have strong oversight of assessment issues. This ideal was evident in many institutions but not always achieved in others.

Audit panels frequently found cause to recommend that the academic board establish an institutional level process by which to assure itself that the university's degrees were of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities. Eighteen per cent of recommendations made in Cycle 1 dealt with the need for external benchmarking, improving or developing consistent assessment policies and practices and ensuring multicampus consistency, while 16 per cent dealt with the need for academic boards to take more responsibility for ensuring compliance with quality assurance processes.

This type of comment was especially common in relation to institutions that operated on a very devolved academic decision-making model. In those cases audit panels strongly recommended central policies and quality assurance procedures as well as external (to the campus) moderation of assessment to ensure confidence in the standards of graduates.

Even in those institutions where good policies were in place, audit panels noted the need for vigilance, particularly where flexible delivery options and alternative articulation arrangements were available, rendering issues associated with student assessment more complex. Flexible arrangements require more rigorous, systematic and transparent policies and processes to underpin confidence in their outcomes.

1.8 Consistency Across Multiple Campuses

Multicampus institutions faced real difficulties in balancing inter-campus consistency with student centred learning and modern approaches to course delivery and assessment. In some cases the legacy of amalgamation of previously independent organisations into a single institution was still apparent at the time of audit. Some had adopted an incremental approach moving from relative campus autonomy to cooperative and then centrally regulated policies.



Another issue relevant to multicampus and distance education institutions was assessment turnaround time. AUQA identified a recurrent theme arising from interviews with offshore and distance education students which indicated that assessment turnaround times could be longer than specified, or that the specified times themselves were too long. Given that assessment plays an important role in the learning process, AUQA recommended that efforts should be made to speed up assessment turnaround times so that students could benefit from their assessment prior to submitting subsequent work.

External cross-location moderation, was a commended feature of assessment policies in several institutions. This applied particularly to those institutions with faculties, subjects or courses operating in more than one location.

1.9 Assessment and Academic Integrity

Most universities had policies on plagiarism and had made considerable efforts to keep staff and students informed about those policies. Some institutions had begun to use plagiarism detection software. A few relied heavily on invigilated examinations in preference to assignments to reduce the potential impact of plagiarism.

1.10 Academic Benchmarking

University governing bodies were increasingly expressing interest in being able to measure and compare their university's performance with other universities.

Commonly, audit panels pointed to the desirability of establishing, at the institutional level, a comprehensive process to ensure that degrees were of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities.

Consortia of universities have emerged as useful groups for benchmarking. These include the Group of Eight (Go8), the Australian Technology Network (ATN) and the Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) group. International comparisons were rarely formally embedded in institutional quality assurance systems.

Before embarking on identification of comparator institutions, however, it is important that institutions have clarity about what is meant by benchmarking and the intended outcomes of the process so as to choose appropriate partners for comparison. There was a broad range of interpretation of what the term benchmarking means. Definitions included:

- a general need to look externally
- setting of performance targets
- structured comparison of particular activities
- to ensure equivalence in multiple campuses, both onshore and offshore
- fruitful exchange of ideas
- developmental activity undertaken to understand how others operate, and
- a well-developed process for adapting good practice from elsewhere to improve one's own performance.

Sometimes panels commented on evidence of benchmarking occurring across different areas of a university but found less evidence that these processes had been used to identify improvement opportunities and improve performance outcomes. In some cases, benchmarking systems that had been implemented were not extended beyond the main campus, particularly when other campuses were distant from the main campus or overseas. The point was also made that internal benchmarking (for example comparisons of retention and attrition rates by institutions with multiple campuses) could help to monitor the consistency and quality of the experience on different campuses.



Even in some universities which explicitly benchmark against peer universities in Australia and internationally, the panels commented that a more formal strategy could more thoroughly embed benchmarking as a development tool within a university culture of improvement.

1.11 Academic Quality Assurance

Most institutions had set up systems for quality assurance primarily directed towards on campus programs. Most problems seemed to occur with delivery to multiple campuses, or distance education (flexible learning), where it often appeared to be assumed that no special QA accommodation needed to be made. In some cases, processes for teaching and learning and even assessment methods differed between modes and locations of delivery but were not accompanied by specific or well articulated processes for allowing the institution to ensure that the quality of experience and learning outcomes was equivalent.

In general terms, there was a tension between a desire to standardise programs whilst also retaining sufficient flexibility for appropriate forms of customisation. In such cases, panels recommended the need for systematic staff discussion so that a more shared understanding could emerge. In dual sector institutions panels also observed the need for institutions to develop clear policy to guide teaching in different pedagogic frameworks, specifically those of vocational education and training (VET) and higher education.

Quality assurance for programs taught overseas posed considerable difficulties for many, as well as a reputational risk for some. In a large number of audits AUQA recommended that the academic board take a more active role in the ongoing close scrutiny of the academic aspects of programs taught offshore and develop a detailed academic quality assurance framework for all offshore ventures.

In several instances AUQA recommended that institutions develop principles to guide the development, management and monitoring of transnational programs and partnerships, including probity and due diligence procedures and the maintenance of consistent and appropriate admission standards, including English competency.

An important distinction noted in at least one case is the need for courses offered by overseas partners to belong to the parent Australian institution, rather than being 'accredited' by the Australian institution. Paragraph 16 of the 2007 National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes states that *"Universities and other self-accrediting institutions do not have the power to accredit the courses of other institutions."*

1.12 Future Directions

In this first cycle of audits it was apparent that, with a few notable exceptions, most of the institutional effort had been expended at the 'front end' of the process, in developing policies, plans and processes. Closing the loop, implementation, evaluation and feedback, were much less well developed. This is to be expected in the historical snapshot represented by this review.

- In the second cycle audits more detailed and explicit emphasis on evidence, outcomes and their use in improving performance can be expected.

In this first round it was apparent that many institutions were struggling with consistent approaches to teaching and learning for multicampus and offshore teaching and assessment. Equally, more attention to flexible, student-centred programs and the special challenges they hold for quality assurance of the learning experience would be warranted.

- In the second cycle, experience with these challenges should have matured and audit panels should be seeking evidence of more rigorous approaches.



The other challenge that presented itself clearly throughout these first cycle audit reports is the gulf between the policy makers and decision makers on the one hand, and the teachers and academic administrators on the other. In large and devolved institutions the gulf is harder to bridge. Since many audit reports drew attention to the failure of policies to be acknowledged or implemented at unit level, this gap should have been rectified by the time of the next audit.

- In the second cycle, it should be anticipated that universities will have closed the gap between central policy decisions and local implementation.

The importance of strong leadership by a vice-chancellor committed to teaching and learning quality cannot be over-emphasised and was evident from findings of the first round audits. Genuine commitment was signalled by those institutions that attached a quantum of core funding to performance on indicators of teaching and learning quality outcomes.

- In the second cycle panels could seek evidence that performance measures of teaching and learning have been built into formulae for funding allocation to academic units.

This analysis of the first cycle of AUQA audits indicates that the following factors are conducive to effecting quality assurance for learning and teaching:

- strategic plans that acknowledge the teaching and learning responsibility
- teaching and learning plans and policies that articulate a vision for achieving strategic goals in teaching and learning
- simple mechanisms for collecting evidence of performance against plans and feeding back for improvement
- mechanisms to link unit funding to outcomes in teaching and learning
- evidence of effective uptake of policies and ownership of objectives at all levels in the institution
- oversight of all aspects of academic quality, through specialist committees, by the academic governing body
- reporting and accountability mechanisms that foster compliance with policies
- external and professional involvement in course design and review
- mechanisms for course design and review that are linked with resource planning
- compliance with a designated schedule of course and unit reviews according to a designated process
- well-developed systems for ensuring comparability between delivery modes and locations
- policies that reward individuals for excellent performance in teaching and learning
- policies that reward academic units for teaching and learning related outcomes and compliance with quality assurance policies
- clear definitions of the purposes and processes for benchmarking and identified peer institutions for benchmarking partnerships



- a formal strategy to embed benchmarking as a development tool within an institutional culture of improvement
- descriptions of benchmarking processes and evidence of actions following outcomes
- clearly defined graduate attributes, mechanisms for ensuring that they are embedded in curriculum, and for assessing their achievement, and
- well-defined policies on all aspects of assessment and evidence of compliance.



2. Introduction

2.1 Scope of Thematic Review

This thematic study covers all institutional reports prepared by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in the first round of institutional reviews from October 2002 to November 2007 (See Appendix 1). Most, but not all, of these audits were of universities and the title of the publication uses the term 'universities' as reflecting the source of most of the comments below. The audits included four other institutions that have the right to internally approve their awards. Together, these institutions make up the current Australian 'self-accrediting' institutions. This review does not consider the situation in non self-accrediting higher education institutions, which were not audited by AUQA in this review cycle.

Specifically this review:

- identifies structures and mechanisms deployed by institutions to oversee curriculum design and review, assessment and academic benchmarking
- highlights collegial and management processes demonstrated as achieving, or being required to achieve, effective outcomes in these areas, and
- summarises sector-wide policies and practices in these areas, as identified by audit reports.

It should be emphasised that this review describes practices and situations as they were at the time of the audit which, in some cases, was six years prior to the writing of this review document. This review represents a summary of observations and lessons learned from AUQA audits. It does not represent an accurate description of the way things are currently. The observations and recommendations made by the AUQA review panels have most likely been addressed by institutions in the intervening period.

Observations made in this review are intended to act as an historical reference and as a guideline for the current second round of audits. The terms 'program' and 'course' are used interchangeably to reflect the whole award that is being studied rather than units within a degree program.

The review is structured to provide an initial overview of key issues arising from previous audits which highlight areas for focus in future audits, followed by a descriptive analysis of key findings under planning processes, structural and policy frameworks, course design and review, graduate attributes, assessment, collegial and management processes and academic benchmarking.

2.2 Overview of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations

Because of the broad scope of the general term 'teaching and learning' and its overlap with other areas such as strategic planning, and because many commendations and recommendations were multi-faceted, an accurate quantification of each was not possible. Nevertheless, a broad analysis of emphasis is helpful.

Each AUQA audit report contains a commentary on specific aspects of institutional performance, plus a summary of the most significant findings. AUQA explains that a commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an area in need of attention which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by the institution, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. Comments in this study



consider affirmations and recommendations together since they both relate to needed improvements.

Among the commendations, the clear majority related to recognition of exemplar projects and initiatives (these are highlighted in the body of this review), and to acknowledgement of a small number of institutions that had developed robust quality assurance frameworks that effectively aligned planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback of outcomes for improvement.

The single largest category of recommendations and affirmations (approximately 17 per cent of the total) related to the need for academic boards to take greater responsibility for ensuring consistency of, and compliance with, quality assurance frameworks, policies and practices.

The next largest category of recommendations and affirmations, at around 16 per cent, related to better definition of graduate attributes and embedding them in course objectives, content and assessment.

A large body of recommendations (around 15 per cent) related to improvements in planning practice such as:

- identifying measurable indicators
- allocating priorities, responsibilities and timelines
- aligning plans, implementation, evaluation, reports and budgets, and
- promulgating those plans and policies to staff.

Recommendations, each accounting for around 6 per cent of recommendations, related to:

- introducing explicit benchmarking processes
- improving course approvals and review processes
- ensuring appropriate external input on course advisory committees
- improving or developing consistent assessment policies and practices
- ensuring multicampus consistency
- improving processes for using student evaluations and providing students with information as to the outcomes of their evaluations, and
- providing better support for professional development of new and inexperienced or part-time staff.

Other areas, that each accounted for about 3 per cent of recommendations, included:

- better definition of graduate attributes and embedding them in course objectives, content and assessment
- better definition of the meaning of the research/teaching nexus
- better infrastructure support for management information or online delivery, and
- better approaches to recognising, rewarding and sharing good practice.



3. Managing Teaching and Learning Quality

3.1 Strategic Plans

In almost all cases, institutions had developed a strategic plan, which sets out those features by which the institution wishes to be known. The strategic plan, insofar as it indicates the emphasis of its educational efforts, the cultural milieu in which education occurs, or the qualities of graduates of the university, is a framework for curriculum design. A reference to excellence in teaching can also influence curriculum design.

Most strategic plans included a general framework statement on mission, vision and principles, while specific educational policies were explicated in a learning and teaching plan. In some cases, the strategic plan was quite specific about the kind of student the institution caters for or the kind of educational outcomes the institution expects to produce. In a few cases, the plan was outcome-centred or employment-centred.

3.1.1 Do Strategic Plans Effectively Address Teaching and Learning?

In all but a few cases in this first cycle of audits, systematic planning and, consequently, reporting had permeated below the institutional strategic plan, and faculty operating plans aligned with the strategic plan had been developed and integrated into institutional operational and resource allocation plans.

It is sometimes difficult to judge the effectiveness of a strategic plan. Do staff know about it? Is it understood? Are there mechanisms to implement it? In some cases, the essentials of the strategic plan had been adopted at the faculty and school level, but in a way that was incoherent or lacking appropriate outcomes or other measures. There might be a collegial understanding of an emphasis, without clear evidence of either the understanding or effects arising from this emphasis.

- For instance, one university included a very clear statement of intent in its strategic plan:

“Learning is the core activity of the University, bringing students and staff together through active learning and the pursuit of knowledge. The University aims to produce graduates whose knowledge, skills and commitment to lifelong learning enable them to play a significant role in their community.”

The audit panel noted, at the time of the review, that although the problems were being addressed by the university, the “teaching and learning activities have until recently been given significantly less attention than this statement would suggest. This is evidenced by poor implementation and reporting against university-level plans, the lack of an agreed set of outcome measures, insufficient documentation on teaching policies, practices and unsystematic processes for evaluating the performance of academic programs and courses.”

In other cases, there was a lack of coherence between the strategic plan and policies to implement elements of the plan.

For instance:

- A university had devised Strategic Focus Areas in 1998 to be used as the basis for the development of a University Statement of Strategic Intent (SSI). The SSI, for the period 2002-2004 identified six broad focus areas including Learning and Teaching/The Learning Environment. The audit panel noted that “The relationship between the SSI and other University-level plans such as the Teaching and Learning Plan 2000-2004 ... is unclear. [This plan contains] further lists of specific objectives,



some of which overlap with SSI objectives and some of which are particular to the individual [plan]. The panel formed the view that [this plan has] effectively been rendered obsolete by the SSI. Few staff are aware of [its] existence.”

- The panel reviewing another university stated: “[the] University has a Strategic Plan, but ... each of the faculties largely operates as a discrete independent business unit within the University. The limited role being played, particularly up to recent times, by the Academic Senate, has accentuated the autonomy of each faculty. As a result, there are inconsistencies in practice across the faculties that are significant and not obviously justifiable. The University itself diagnosed this in respect of student and community relations.”

3.2 Teaching and Learning Plans and Policies

In almost all cases, details of how strategic goals were to be achieved were spelt out in a teaching and learning plan. This plan did not always address the goals of the strategic plan. For example, a strategic plan might note that an aim of the university is to be in the ‘top quality band for scholarly teaching and learning’, but details of how this would be benchmarked and assured might be incomplete in the teaching and learning plan.

3.2.1 Communicating the Plan

In a number of cases the details of the teaching and learning plan did not appear to be understood or ‘owned’ by the academic staff and this problem appeared to be quite widespread. Even if the plan is not widely understood, issues of practical import arising from the plan should be understood.

- An example comes from one institution where the panel commented that, although the teaching and learning plan itself was not well known, there was a high level of understanding of the major ways in which the plan was implemented. “Matters relating to the quality of teaching and learning are guided by the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Plan (TLEP), reviewed annually. The panel found that although few staff were aware of the TLEP, there was a high level of awareness of and involvement in the Teaching Quality Appraisal scheme which is the strategy for implementing many of the goals of the TLEP.”

3.2.2 Components of the Plan

Typically, teaching and learning plans provide strategy, and detailed accounts of operational activities. A comprehensive plan could include:

- policy on curriculum design and review
- assessment and plagiarism policies and procedures
- academic quality assurance policies and structures
- policies on use of technology and information services
- mechanisms for recognising and rewarding excellence
- statement of performance indicators and accountabilities
- acknowledgement of resource considerations, and
- approaches to academic benchmarking relevant to the institution’s mission.

The most common problem identified by the audit panels was a weakness or failure in linking plans and policies to implementation and monitoring effectiveness. Many of the audit panels’ recommendations addressed these deficiencies in one form or another.

Examples of plans that were commended for their comprehensiveness were:

- One university’s Teaching and Learning Tactical Plan, which specified a number of strategic priorities and translated them into performance targets.



- A plan which had goals and related strategies for a number of topics such as evaluation and review mechanisms, information technology and telecommunications, and recognised and rewarded excellence and the promotion of learning. The plan identified strategic priorities for the year, accompanied by a statement of accountability and indicators. Since 2000, annual reports from faculties against the Learning and Teaching Plan had become standard practice, with consolidated reports against the Plan produced by the deputy vice-chancellor. In response to these reports, priorities for the next year are identified.
- Another plan included objectives, strategies and indicators that give effect to overall strategic principles. The plan also included benchmarking at the national level and against international universities with regard to the quality of education provision and the quality of graduates. Academic areas have strategic plans and each can choose to focus annually on a subset of strategies to achieve its goals, and to monitor its performance and meet targets in relation to these principles.

3.2.3 Alignment

A common problem was either the absence of, or the failure to align, priorities, actions, targets, accountabilities and timelines. For example:

- One institution's faculties and organisational units prepare Strategic Overview Action Plans (SOAPs) annually. These contain actions linked to the 131 strategies contained in the University's Strategic Priorities and Future Directions 2006 - 2010 (FSPFD). The audit panel found that while SOAPs contained actions against each strategy, the plans lacked any performance targets and did not contain timeframes for implementation. Also, specific responsibilities had not been assigned for identified actions, making it difficult to clarify operational levels of responsibility. Consequently, AUQA recommended that the institution: "strengthen its strategic planning framework through the use of performance targets, consistent alignment of Key Accountability Measures and Strategic Overview Action Plans with strategic priorities and clear specification of responsibilities and expected completion dates for actions identified".
- At another institution, the panel noted that the University's Guide for Submission of Academic Proposals was not closely aligned with the University's Learning and Teaching Plan 2005–2007 and, in particular, did not include any requirements for statements of graduate attributes to be included in new program or course proposals. Given that the university was engaged in development of contextualised graduate attributes, the panel considered that new course proposals should contain explicit statements about graduate attributes and demonstrate how the University's Guidelines on Learning that Inform Teaching had been taken into account.

Implementation of planning processes at academic unit level was found to be variable within any given institution. Sometimes the complex logic underlying plans, strategies and operational details interfered with their effective communication and implementation by staff. In one case the audit panel was moved to make the specific recommendation that: "every effort be made to decrease bureaucratic requirements and avoid excessive detail in policies and processes".

For example:

- In one *Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan, 2005-2006* the eight enabling objectives listed in the Strategic Plan were grouped in various ways into several 'priority areas' with associated actions and indicators. The Performance Portfolio also listed the eight objectives with nine associated 'institutional teaching and learning strategies' which had been replaced at the time of the audit by actions in the development of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan. The



audit panel discussed this with various staff and officers of the institution. It was generally acknowledged that a wider understanding of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan was needed as well as better comprehension of how strategies and actions were aligned with the institutional objectives.

- Another *Teaching and Learning Functional Plan* addressed in some detail the teaching-related strategic priorities from its strategic plan and mission statement and was based upon the 'Plan Do Review Improve' (PDR) model. The audit panel found it encouraging that the institution was seeking to incorporate quality consciousness into its planning, however, it also found the linkage between PDR and planning to be tenuous. For example, it was unclear how the specific terms of PDR related to their associated strategies. It was also unclear as to what value was being added through this approach. In discussion with staff from a sample of schools, it became apparent that the plan had yet to make much impact on academic developments throughout the university, with the institutional strategic plan being the better known and more relevant document.

Several institutions produced a handbook or manual for the guidance of teaching staff. These handbooks collect relevant policies and templates in a consolidated reference. Good practice in this regard included a website to expand on the handbook and provide online reference tools.

- One such booklet summarised key policy principles, listed relevant policies and plans, and referenced external documents such as the Course Experience Questionnaire annual survey of graduates. It was available through the institution's intranet. The booklet supplements a dedicated website that links to full versions of all policies and procedures (including those relating to human resources and financial management issues)
- One institution's suite of high level plans included the University Strategic Plan supported by a range of Core Functional Plans including the Learning & Teaching Strategic Plan. These serve as reference points for more operational, faculty, campus management, professional unit and facilitating plans and are bundled together as a single document, which aids alignment of the plans and communication.

3.2.4 Benefits of Audit

There is evidence of the benefits of the audit process in cases where the institution itself identified its own shortcomings and remediation.

- One institution's own internal teaching and learning working party identified the following self criticisms, which were confirmed by the audit panel:
 - there is no overall coherent strategy for teaching and learning and there is no consistency of approach
 - documentation with regard to teaching and learning is fragmented and largely unknown
 - there is no clearly articulated process for achieving ... standards and benchmarks
 - mechanisms for monitoring teaching practice needed to be developed
 - academic induction is non-existent
 - there is no sharing of good teaching practices
 - some teaching practices are very outdated and there are no clear mechanisms to encourage/motivate staff to improve their pedagogic skills, and
 - there is little communication on teaching and learning matters.



The institution recognised the need to progress toward a teaching and learning plan and infrastructure for managing it. This process illustrates the stimulus for improvement that institutional audits can provide.

- Another example of effective self review was provided by one university which, in its own report on its academic senate said:

“At present, the committee structure, both formal and less formal, of Academic Senate, and the way in which Senate interacts with those committees, is neither cohesive nor particularly effective. This is because the structure has evolved in an ad hoc way over the last 14 years ... It is clear that we need to define and formulate much more clearly our quality assurance processes for academic purposes. In particular, our mechanisms for monitoring and overseeing the quality of our teaching and learning activities require better definition and structure, and they also require some capacity to exercise authority and control.”

Once again the audit panel endorsed the institution’s own observations and intentions.

3.3 Structures and Mechanisms to Support the Teaching and Learning Plan

3.3.1 Typical Structures

Ownership of the teaching and learning plan, and the mechanisms set up to drive it, appeared to vary considerably. In most cases the academic board or senate has the delegation to assure the quality of learning and teaching within the university by developing appropriate policies, including course accreditation and periodic reviews. In other cases, although the titular responsibility may rest with the academic board, these duties appeared to have been delegated to the faculty level. Executive positions, such as that of deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and faculty dean, have management responsibilities that may or may not include expectations for implementing change and achieving outcomes in the teaching and learning plan.

- The deliberative and executive structure in one institution, which is fairly typical, consists of the Academic Board, its Academic Policy and Program Review Committee and its Teaching and Learning Committee, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor responsible for learning support. Academic organisational units such as faculties also have Teaching and Learning Committees, chaired by the respective Dean or Sub-dean (Teaching & Learning). This provides the linkage from schools through to the centre. Deans or Sub-deans work with heads of schools and program directors and provide leadership in teaching, learning and academic planning. Programs are usually the responsibility of program directors who report to a head of school.
- A few institutions had a more devolved structure in line with a longstanding culture of faculty independence. Such a structure would have a tiered system of plans for teaching and learning. In one example, at the institutional level, goals are developed by pro vice-chancellor and targets set for each goal by the Teaching and Learning Committee – a committee of the Academic Board. This committee also monitors annually the teaching and learning plans of each faculty which are published for information purposes. Most faculties have associate dean or equivalent positions for undergraduate teaching, postgraduate coursework, and higher degree research activity. These positions help to ensure that policies are implemented and monitored throughout the faculty, and meetings between these associate deans help to ensure consistency and support teaching and learning goals. Faculties are expected to develop their own teaching and learning plans. Often compliance with a standard planning template is not required, with diversity encouraged.



Although institutional and/or faculty education ('teaching' or 'teaching and learning' or 'learning and teaching') committees appeared to be universal, their effectiveness was not always so readily apparent.

For example:

- "The audit panel noted, in its discussions with the University Education Committee, and the University Research Committee a lack of understanding of their roles and the scope of their responsibilities. This situation was also reflected in discussions with college staff and college education and research committee members even though the individual committee's terms of reference clearly define the roles of the University committees. Staff were also unclear about the authority of each committee relative to that of the Executive member who chairs it."

A common reason for lack of integration of policy and plans into the life of the institution is that there are sometimes too many policies or structures, or that they are confusing. Audit panels have been consistent in criticising redundancy or an excess of policy documentation when evident. In at least one case the audit panel sounded an alarm on the risk of excessive policy complexity in an otherwise admirable and very thorough system, as in the following example:

- "In general terms, the panel found that across many areas of the University's activities considerable effort and energy are devoted by management and staff to the development of policy and systems, but that effective implementation of policy is often problematic. Line management, in particular, needs to be used more effectively to ensure progress towards institutional priorities is being achieved. There is also a need to simplify the University's complex policy and system environment. Many staff and students struggle to understand the myriad policies and systems."

In some cases this lack of clarity was compounded by what appeared to be an unnecessary multiplicity of committees.

For example

- "The University has three committees related to teaching and learning; namely, Academic Council, the Curriculum and Teaching Committee and the Core Curriculum Committee. The Academic Council is defined as the principal academic committee for the University and is advisory to the Vice-Chancellor. The Curriculum and Teaching Committee (CTC) is described as being the education quality committee of the University. Although it is able to make recommendations to Academic Council for the approval of units, courses and degrees, it is not formally constituted as a sub-committee of the Council and has no role in developing academic policies related to teaching and learning. In the recent establishment of the Office of Quality Management, the Director of that Office has been made ex officio Chair of the CTC. The Core Curriculum Committee is charged with all matters related to the Core Curriculum. It is chaired by the Provost. The panel was provided with no convincing rationale for the number of these committees and reporting lines for the management of teaching and learning activities and considers that considerable benefit in terms of responsive decision-making and clearer lines of accountability would be brought about by a review of these committees and their relationships with each other."

3.3.2 Linking Academic Planning with Resource Planning

Good practice would require academic planning processes to be aligned in some way with the University's resource planning processes. In most cases, during the first cycle audits, such a link was not evident. Some positive examples were explicitly commented upon by audit panels. For example:



- At one institution the budget process contained incentives for the implementation of learning and teaching goals. Within the framework provided by the Strategic Plan, the University Learning and Teaching Plan 2005–2007 set out nine specific goals, aligned to incentives in the budget process, and also aligned to the published Guidelines on Learning, approved by Academic Board. Responsibility for strategic direction and for implementation of many of the strategies in the Plan rested largely with the Academic Board Committee on Education and the Associate Deans (Education) who are members of this Committee. The Associate Deans were supported by the Division of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement) and, in particular, by the Learning and Teaching Unit within the Division. The panel observed that this model, of a committee of learning and teaching ‘champions’, assisted by strong divisional support and budgetary incentives, appears to provide an effective model for change within the institution.

3.3.3 Institutional Policies and Their Implementation

Academic policy making was examined in all audit reports. All universities had general rules governing awards and most had developed a range of policies on academic standards and learning and teaching matters. Not all these policies were systematically reviewed or updated.

Particularly in multicampus institutions, panels identified deficiencies in feedback loops citing few systematic methods by which central bodies could know whether there had been a breakdown in implementation of policies at school or individual level.

For example:

- At the time of the audit visit, the University Secretary and the Chair of Academic Senate at one institution had uncovered a gap in their processes that they were addressing. Although Executive Deans were held responsible for the activities of their division through a comprehensive performance management system, the main way in which a failure of policy implementation was discovered was retrospectively, through the occurrence of an error.

3.3.4 Linking Teaching and Learning Plans with Research

Most universities lay claim to a research-teaching nexus in their academic climate but, at the times of these audits, few had institutionalised the claim in policies or structures.

- One university was an exception to this generalisation. One of its key strategic objectives is to be an internationally outstanding research-led university. Its related aim is that the teaching and learning be research-led. This commitment was expressed in the University’s Nine Principles Guiding Teaching and Learning adopted by the University Academic Board (UAB) in 2003. In addition to the Nine Principles document, it had also produced a guiding paper on the Teaching-Research Nexus for staff. The Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) was responsible for monitoring progress made in this area, for example via the course reviews. Nevertheless, the audit panel found that these ambitions were, to a large extent, implemented in practice but there was a lack of a shared understanding of what research-led teaching meant. Both staff and students offered differing interpretations of its meaning, and differing examples of how the teaching offered was research-led. These examples varied from faculty to faculty. The panel noted the need for a concentrated effort to promote the work on this topic, and so embed a firm understanding about research-led teaching across all areas of the university.



3.3.5 Support for Staff

Most institutions provide support for academic staff in teaching and learning through a specialised unit. These units vary in their size and scope but most support some forms of flexible delivery and some form of induction for new teachers and ongoing development for experienced teachers. In many cases this ongoing development takes the form of optional academic programs such as graduate certificates or masters in higher education, as well as regular workshops.

- Activities of one such unit, for example included:
 - Teaching and learning-related staff development – a program for all newly-appointed staff without teaching experience
 - a Graduate Certificate in University Learning
 - supporting sessional teaching staff
 - supporting flexible teaching and learning, especially the development of quality assurance standards that must be met before units can be made available to students, and
 - the provision of training materials and resources to staff.
- Another provided a Foundations of Teaching and Learning Course but had introduced other schemes as well. An advanced teaching and learning program was introduced in 2001 as part of a professional development program for senior academic staff that influenced the quality of teaching and learning within the university. The university, through the Teaching and Learning Committee, also operated a Teaching Internship Scheme, where PhD students (12 in 2004) were appointed 0.3 FTE to supported teaching roles. This scheme was introduced in 2000, and aligned with the university's stated objective to 'attract, develop and retain high quality staff with demonstrated teaching skills', as well as its commitment to 'a strong inter-relationship between teaching and research'. The scheme included a limited amount of supervised teaching responsibility, resourcing for associated costs and financial provision for associated professional development.

3.3.6 Recognising and Rewarding Good Teaching

Although rewarding good teaching through promotion criteria and teaching excellence awards has been an accepted strategy for some time in Australian institutions, the majority of institutional audits made no explicit comment about it, possibly because it had entered the realm of standard practice. There were several instances mentioned where vice-chancellor's awards for excellence in teaching were complemented by awards at faculty or academic unit level.

- At one university, teaching awards were conducted in conjunction with the student guild so that the teaching award system required student nominations.
- Another institution had three university-wide Vice-Chancellor's Awards for excellence in teaching, together with faculty annual teaching awards and U21 teaching fellowships. The university organised an annual event to identify the university's best teachers and to share good teaching practices, namely the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Colloquium. AUQA commended this university for having developed a variety of complementary approaches to recognise and reward high quality teaching.



A few institutions had instituted maintenance of a professional portfolio for promotion purposes, where teaching achievements were recorded alongside research and other aspects of performance. While structured portfolios were believed to assist with the assessment of claims for promotion, they were often cited as labour intensive for staff to prepare.

- At one institution, portfolios were accompanied by an 8000 word summary to highlight the evidence including, potentially, peer reviews of teaching.
- At another, initial resentment by staff of the chore of compiling the portfolio gave way to a recognition that once compiled it was easy to maintain and the ability to use different parts of the portfolio for different purposes was appreciated. AUQA commended the portfolio-based approach to demonstrating academic achievement, and its use in confirmation, promotion and annual development discussions at that institution.
- At another audit, the panel noted the relatively high incidence of academic staff being promoted on the basis of their teaching performance and commended the mechanisms in place for supporting, enhancing, and rewarding teaching practice as evidenced from the implementation of the Teaching Development Fund and introduction of the teaching excellence and merit awards.

Several institutions had introduced teaching and learning innovation grants to support projects for innovation in teaching, learning and assessment. A handful of universities that had performed well in national teaching award application processes made explicit mention of internal support for applicants for those grants.



4. Program Approval and Review

4.1 Program Approval

4.1.1 External Input

The usual, but not universal, practice of Australian universities in curriculum development is to appoint a program or course development committee that may include external and professional input. External input can include some or all of recent graduates, potential clients or employers, students, external academics and industry representatives.

Some go further, for example:

- One institution, for each unit of the course, asks two external moderators to assess the quality of the unit descriptions. This external involvement provided a high level of assurance, at least at the design stage, that the course would be of an appropriate standard and would achieve its aims. This institution was commended by AUQA for including input from a wide range of internal and external sources in unit design and in course development and review.

4.1.2 Components of Program Proposals

Normally a course proposal is expected to specify:

- demonstrated market need
- a business plan demonstrating viability
- the contribution of the course to the institution's strategic plan
- reference to the institution's philosophies around issues such as student-centred learning and graduate attributes
- approaches to recruitment with special reference to groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education
- course objectives
- teaching methods including placements and online technology
- explication of the teaching/research link
- types and frequency of assessment, and
- resource needs and availability.

4.1.3 Approvals Processes

Frequently, course proposals were submitted for approval using a centrally determined template. Good practice might have the process of curriculum or course development and review supported by a well documented procedural manual. This practice was noted in several but not all institutions.

In most cases, proposals proceed through faculty decision making to the academic governance body of the institution for final approval. In many cases, faculty boards and academic senates relied heavily on teaching and learning committees or similar to ensure that all relevant policies were complied with. In several institutions, an additional parallel process through a resource committee or vice-chancellor's advisory committee ensured that the proposal matched the institution's priorities for its resource utilisation. In this regard, guidelines for course proposals often specified minimum enrolments. Regular reviews of course enrolments and viability were also commonplace.



4.2 Course Review

4.2.1 Review Policies

Most institutions specify a cycle of regular reviews of courses, usually every three or five years. Some specify that courses need to be re-accredited at specific intervals, for example every four years. Variation in frequency and style of review was often related to specific aspects of the culture of the institution, its mission or size.

For example, at the time of their audits:

- One institution required bachelor awards to be reviewed every five to seven years and non-bachelor awards every two years.
- Another identified 'academic reviews' as comprehensive reviews of all aspects of an academic unit's activity while 'course reviews' were more limited reviews of program offerings.
- Another, consistent with its strategic commitments, had initiated a course renewal process designed to ensure that courses were aligned to industry needs, market demand, pathways between sectors and plans for engagement. The concept of 'cornerstone' and 'market-leading' courses had been introduced. The former were courses which supported the continued development of the institution's local region, while the latter were designed to attract students more broadly.

In general, audit panels commented favourably on course reviews that required collection of data from student evaluation of teachers and courses as well as national comparative data from the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), and similar datasets, together with views of expert external reviewers and employers, and trends in enrolments.

In a number of cases, audit panels commented on the lack of an overview or policy structure for review schedules, comprehensive terms of reference for review panels, guidance on information for reviews and mechanisms to follow up the recommendations from course reviews. This resulted in a lack of confidence that review outcomes could be addressed in a consistent and systematic manner.

- At one university, the Teaching and Learning Committee maintained a register to ensure that schools and courses are reviewed at the required intervals. AUQA commended the university on the processes of planning and review through mechanisms such as comprehensive and well integrated school and course review processes, and through an increase in the performance based funding of the teaching component of the university's budget.

For some institutions, the history of development of course reviews was instructive, demonstrating an institutional intent to integrate the planning, review and improvement cycle into core activities.

For example:

- One institution used reviews to develop a response to an identified issue, and sometimes commissioned a review to address a specific problem. Routine reviews included Self-Assessment Reviews of schools addressing 100 factors. These were then commented on by an external validator (external to the school, but not necessarily to the institution). In 1998, the system was reviewed and feedback was that the self-assessments were valuable, but too inward-looking, and were divorced from strategic planning. Other criticisms included too great a focus on process issues rather than outcomes, and a lack of formal monitoring of action consequent



on the reviews. The university's response was to institute a new planning framework that incorporated mechanisms to achieve the aims of assessment, review and continuous improvement, thereby linking quality and planning.

- At one, program convenors completed annual program reports which included a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats analysis and noted the intended improvement actions. They also reported on a range of centrally established indicators of demand and program outcomes. Annual program reports were submitted by the program convenor to the head of school, who forwarded them to the dean. The dean then provided a summary report of the faculty reports to the Teaching and Learning Excellence Committee. The institution also had provision for a program 'stocktake evaluation', which could be initiated by the relevant faculty dean. It was a more detailed investigation and could involve an element of external input, typically via one or more external member(s) being appointed to the evaluation panel. These program reviews were supplemented by three yearly evaluations of suites of cognate or related programs.
- Another good example with some different aspects was found at a university where the Planning and Budget Committee (PBC) held overall responsibility for most of the planning and for all quality assurance activities. Heads of departments were responsible for the implementation of their department's self-assessments. The University's Planning Office provided data to support these activities and, on behalf of the PBC, circulated information about the various procedures associated with the quality assurance activities. The Quality Assurance Accountability Committee (QAAC) was responsible for monitoring the development and outcomes of quality assurance activities at all levels of the benchmarking activities.
- One institution adopted the approach of a short annual review checking a couple of key viability indicators (such as enrolment and retention) for all programs, followed by more intense scrutiny of programs with problems. This was cited as a good way of putting the review effort where it was most needed.

4.2.2 Compliance with Requirements for Review

In many cases, audit panels commented that formal policies or cycles of review were so recently introduced that it was not possible to assess their effectiveness or the level of compliance they engendered.

One university was commended for its effective mechanism for ensuring compliance with review requirements.

- Since 1997, this university has used a Teaching Quality Appraisal (TQA) scheme to link funding to teaching quality. Faculties received 5 per cent of their teaching funds for distribution in such a way that encouraged or rewarded improvement in teaching and learning practices. Each school completed a questionnaire and the quality of the total responses from a faculty determined how much funding the faculty received. The faculty may then pass it on to schools at its discretion. Some passed on the whole amount, some retained an amount for faculty initiatives. The TQA had been very effective as a driver for adherence to policies on teaching but was oriented towards the existence of processes, rather than their effect. At the time of its audit the university was about to strengthen the approach, based on the effectiveness of the processes that were NOW known to be widely in place.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, an institution's compliance with its own agreed policy on course reviews was discovered quite often by audit panels to be deficient. Many institutions appear to find that resource and time constraints limit their ability to maintain the intended review schedule and courses might not be reviewed as regularly as policies imply. Reviews were often ad hoc and in response to local needs rather than policy imperatives.



An example typical of many highlights the problem of excellent policies that are not matched by implementation, perhaps because they are too ambitious in their scope.

- One institution had a policy for annual course reports for each course to be provided to the school's courses committee. These reports were intended to provide a summary of the performance of a course in the preceding year (using agreed indicators), highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the course and serving as the basis of its continuous improvement. The policy required that once school courses committees had considered the reports, they were to be forwarded to the curriculum committee. From the small sample of courses selected by the panel, it was evident that the annual course reports had not been compiled consistently for all courses. In the second phase, a comprehensive course review was intended to be conducted every five years to compare course outcomes with other similar courses elsewhere; evaluate the design, delivery, articulation agreements and assessment strategies of the course; incorporate consultation with clients and make recommendations for the future of the course. This process also had not been implemented as intended. The institution itself identified a problem in that the process was internally driven with no external accountability. It might also have been too labour intensive to be feasible.

4.2.3 Role of Professional Accreditation of Programs

Panels also noted that internal reaccreditation of programs is a growing trend in Australian universities, and one that helps assure the currency of educational offerings.

A few universities appeared to rely heavily on the accreditation processes of professional bodies for educational standards and academic quality assurance in professional courses. Panels noted that professional accreditation fulfills a very important function in a university's quality assurance system, providing an external validation against nationally (and sometimes internationally) benchmarked standards. However, it should be complementary to, rather than a substitute for a university's own means for reviewing the quality of its courses.

On several occasions, to reinforce the need for independent validation of standards, audit panels commented on the need for closer links between course review and quality assurance, self-assessment and external audit and a university's planning and benchmarking processes.

4.2.4 Feedback Loop

Often the feedback loop was missing from course reviews and other evaluation processes. While reviews were conducted, they might not have been used to bring about improvements and renewal in the courses reviewed.

For example:

- AUQA recommended that one institution further develop its planning and review cycle to include an explicit link to the organisationally recognised driver of quality, namely improvement.

Students also are somewhat sceptical about the value of student evaluation surveys. They do not see the loop closed in the sense that they are not necessarily made aware of changes that have occurred as a result of student feedback, and indeed sometimes the loop is not closed. There is a need to explore ways of linking data and outcomes and communicating the latter to students. This scepticism can be exacerbated by students feeling that they are over-surveyed.



- The audit panel for one university recommended that review of the quality system should take a student-oriented approach and consider how the system appears from the perspective of an individual student. Matters that might be covered include: the total evaluation load on an average student in any year; how and by whom evaluations are administered; when they are administered; variability in the size/extent of evaluations; notice given to students; how action on the evaluations is managed; and how students are notified of the consequences of the evaluations.

These recommendations could have applied equally to several other institutions, the majority of which were acknowledged to be using some form of student evaluation of courses and teaching as part of their quality assurance approach.

4.2.5 Multicampus and Devolved Institutions

In many cases of multicampus universities, panels emphasised the need for course review to be carried out across all modes and locations of delivery including offshore. It was suggested that such universities consider making the practice of internal benchmarking a much stronger feature of quality assurance systems including, for example, consideration of the significance of such key indicators as comparative rates of student retention and attrition.

In highly devolved universities breakdowns were sometimes noted in implementation of policies at school level and in feedback of the results of reviews to central bodies responsible for whole of university quality oversight.



5. Graduate Attributes

5.1 Implementation

About 80 per cent of institutions reviewed had established a set of graduate attributes as an aid to curriculum design and market relevance prior to the first round audits. Graduate attributes are variously referred to as graduate qualities, graduate characteristics, graduate outcomes, core skills and generic skills. Regardless of the terminology used, however, a common deficit was the failure to make explicit ways in which attributes are incorporated into or affect the curriculum and student learning. Failure to assess outcomes in terms of graduate attributes is widespread but many universities were in the process of addressing this deficit during the first cycle.

5.1.1 Awareness

Often graduate attributes share the fate of teaching and learning plans in that staff and students are not as aware of them as one might hope and they are not embedded in curriculum. Typical comments from audit panels include:

“The audit panel explored the level of awareness of these by staff and students, and the effectiveness of the methods in place for helping students acquire and develop them. Awareness of the Graduate Characteristics is generally low, and at offshore locations it is non-existent. Throughout the University the terms graduate characteristics, generic skills, graduate attributes and others are used interchangeably, contributing to a general lack of clarity and focus. There may be potential to simplify the concept, at least until they are fully embedded, when more sophisticated concepts could be more successfully introduced.”

“The audit panel found that commitment to the Generic Skills in terms of their development and incorporation into the teaching practice of the University, and in terms of their assessment and monitoring, is low. Firstly, the audit panel found little evidence to suggest that the University’s Generic Skills set had been established using a process that systematically incorporated external stakeholder inputs or appropriate benchmarks. Secondly, the audit panel found little evidence to suggest that the Generic Skills are well incorporated into the teaching programs of the University. The recent Review of Teaching Materials concluded that they are not clearly articulated in most areas. Subsequently, Academic Senate has required that they be explicitly listed in study guides for each course. Whether they are listed in the study guides or not, the Generic Skills have not been embedded into the University’s approach to instructional design. For example, there is no reference to the Generic Skills in the induction materials for casual staff, and during its interviews with academic staff, the audit panel met some staff with teaching responsibilities who are either unaware of the Generic Skills, or if they are aware, do not know what to do with them. There is little in the way of Generic Skills professional development opportunities for staff. Some other staff, however, are aware and supportive of the University’s efforts in this regard. Their concern was more in relation to how the uptake of Generic Skills may be determined. A claim made several times to the audit panel was that students are developing the Generic Skills without necessarily recognizing that they are doing so. This may indeed be the case, but given that the University had not developed a method for assessing and monitoring the extent of Generic Skill acquisition, it is difficult to determine how effectively the University is engendering these skills amongst its graduates.”

Compliance was also patchy. In one institution the panel noted that all new course proposals were required to demonstrate how the course addresses graduate characteristics. In this institution, some schools were only starting to consider how they might be incorporated into existing courses, although the disciplines of accounting, engineering and education and creative arts had mapped their academic offerings against the university’s graduate characteristics with a view to assessing their coverage and addressing any gaps. Deans advised that some professional bodies check for alignment of assessment tasks with graduate characteristics during professional accreditation processes.



5.1.2 Embedding Attributes in Curricula

Institutions have used a number of approaches to incorporate graduate attributes in curricula. Examples include the following:

- One institution developed a set of graduate attributes in 1998. In late 2001, the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) required all faculties to develop, based on the university's attribute set, graduate attributes relevant to their discipline areas. The Committee also formed a working party to investigate how the graduate attributes might be integrated into curriculum design processes, teaching and assessment practice, and academic staff development and promotion.
- At another, an Acquisition of Generic Skills matrix was used to check that generic skills and attributes for graduates were addressed in each course. In the University's Tactical Plan for Teaching and Learning there was an explicit requirement that all schools report their Generic Skills Scale performance against the McKinnon-Walker Course Experience Questionnaire benchmarks.
- At another institution, as programs and courses were developed, a matrix was constructed that showed the attention paid (in terms of the proportion of expected student effort) to each of the graduate qualities. To support the developmental nature of the qualities, the institution prohibited any course from having a single summative assessment. Also, staff were expected to design the teaching and assessment arrangements to develop the graduate qualities in appropriate settings including clinical, industry and professional placements. During each course, students were encouraged to write up the extent of their achievement of Graduate Qualities in a dynamic profile and, in some courses, this was built into the requirements. The panel commented that in practice, it seemed few students paid much attention to the Graduate Qualities until their final year when these Qualities were seen as an employment selling point. There was some validation of the Qualities by professional associations, and they were seen to fulfil a useful function in terms of demonstrating alignment with professional requirements. In its Performance Portfolio, the institution signalled its intention to focus "on forging closer links between the Graduate Qualities and assessment of courses".

5.1.3 Generic Versus Discipline-Specific Attributes

In some cases, strategic decisions have been made to allow attributes to vary among faculties and schools and to differentiate between general abilities expected of all graduates and discipline-specific attributes.

- The approach of one university to graduate attributes was based on the premise that, to be meaningful for students and staff, its 12 generic graduate attributes needed to be expressed in the context of the relevant discipline. Faculties were charged with responsibility for expressing the university graduate attributes in the context of the professional area, discipline and program level, and for ensuring that these attributes were reflected in curricula and assessment. The Learning and Teaching Unit had developed a series of toolkits to support staff in the development and assessment of graduate attributes appropriate to the discipline, while an innovative Student Portfolio website was being trialled in the Faculty of Science. The budget process contained a requirement in relation to the mapping of graduate attributes, to ensure that all faculties commenced the process.
- Another institution had established a set of Graduate Attributes, incorporating four 'key graduate attributes' (Service, Professionalism, Enterprise and Workplace Skills) and a larger set of generic attributes. The Teaching and Learning Functional Plan required all faculties to develop a 'course-specific Graduate Attributes Framework for each course' and to 'embed the development of these attributes in the curriculum'. At



the date of the audit, this was largely a mapping exercise, ensuring that all the targeted attributes would be addressed by the totality of units within each course. All proposals for new courses and units were also required to demonstrate how graduate attributes would be addressed.

- Reference to 'graduate qualities' appeared in one institution's first teaching and learning plan (TLP) in 1993. Initially they were listed as university-wide qualities for all students. However, further reflection, work with employers and devolution led the institution to allow attributes to differ between divisions and schools. The process it undertook to arrive at this point is instructive. In 1999, a reviewer was commissioned to assess the extent of coverage of generic attributes across the curriculum, and suggest ways of developing them. The project found that work-related skills were addressed very well. However, critical thinking, sensitivity to Aboriginal issues, and a sense of service and social justice were generally not well-addressed; and history of science, information literacy and communication skills were addressed well in some areas and poorly in others. Recommendations included the production of a policy on teaching and assessing generic attributes, creation of a proposal form for new courses that explicitly provided for generic attributes, and support of staff through pilot projects and professional development. An appropriate Teaching and Learning objective was constructed, and divisions invited to address it in their own TLPs and actions. An institution-wide check by the Director of Teaching and Learning a year later showed that the implementation of this system had been patchy, and depended on the enthusiasm (or otherwise) of individual staff.

5.1.4 Student Awareness of the Benefits of Explicit Graduate Attributes

One of the advantages of generic and graduate attributes is that they are attractive to employers and, with appropriate packaging, students can exploit this advantage on graduation.

- One institution, for example, had developed an employer survey for use by all schools related to the statement of graduate attributes. Schools could adapt it to their own discipline and may use it annually or biennially.

In theory, graduate attributes (outcomes) help to prepare graduates for employment and define distinctive characteristics of graduates in the labour market.

- One university has developed an approach to graduate attributes which maximises this potential. It has developed a graduate capabilities framework which lists the skills that each course should aim to develop in its graduates. In addition to this, each faculty is required to develop capabilities for each discipline which expand and enhance the general list, and develop a graduate capabilities strategy for each course. As well, this university has developed an electronic tool – the Student e-Portfolio – which allows students to record their experiences, activities and accomplishments, as well as the development of their generic capabilities, eg communication, teamwork, problem-solving and leadership and their academic achievements. The Student e-Portfolio was piloted in the first semester in 2004 and has been progressively released. The audit panel considered the Student e-Portfolio to be a valuable tool, not least in making the students aware of the outcomes of their studies. The panel found that there was a need to focus on informing the students about the Student e-Portfolio and its attributes and encouraging them to use it.

This lack of awareness of the usefulness of graduate attributes was common.

- At one institution graduate attributes had been incorporated into a 'brand' but even this had not helped students to fully grasp the benefits. The 'brand' includes both discipline-specific and generic attributes, such as effective communication, capacity for teamwork and collaboration and personal attributes such as an understanding of



ethics, social responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and the principles and application of sustainable development. Academic Board, through its Accreditation Committee, carried responsibility for ensuring that all new or re-accredited courses were consistent with these goals. However, most students met by the panel had no knowledge or understanding of what the 'brand' was or aimed to achieve. Those who had encountered it did not have a good understanding of the goal and consequently were ill equipped to use it to document the discipline-specific and generic skills they were achieving throughout their course.

- At one university, where there is a long tradition of defining and using graduate attributes, the panel found that staff and students could not easily, if at all, refer to the graduate attributes. Student awareness related rather to the intended outcomes of their particular courses and to the importance of the institution's reputation. Despite the university's longstanding experience with graduate attributes, it appeared that a serious effort was still needed to thoroughly embed the concept within the staff and the student population. The panel was moved to comment that given the currently minimal impact of the attributes, the institution may even want to reconsider the value of having a university-level statement of graduate attributes.
- At another, there was considerable awareness of the graduate attributes among the academic staff, but understanding of the attributes did not always seem to be consistently reflected in the implementation of the teaching, learning and assessment processes. The students whom the audit panel met were generally not familiar with the graduate attributes. The majority of the students confirmed that the objectives of a subject were introduced at the beginning of the semester and reference was made to the objectives in relation to the assessment of the course, but indicated that graduate attributes were rarely mentioned.

5.1.5 Mapping Graduate Attributes

Several universities had conducted exercises for mapping their graduate attributes across various university courses.

- One university used a web-based mapping tool, the Graduate Attribute Mapping Process (GAMP) 'to align each graduate attribute with the learning outcomes, assessment and learning activities in each unit of a course'. This program was integrated into the school development process in 2003. The panel examined a number of the colour-coded outcomes of GAMP mapping at the unit and course level, by which the completeness of the coverage of graduate attributes across the curriculum could be identified. The panel noted the involvement of the Teaching and Learning Committee in the mapping process and suggested the need for greater consistency in the understanding and application of graduate attributes across the discipline and professional areas through ongoing use of the GAMP tool and curriculum design.
- Another institution had a Generic Skills Mapper Tool to enable staff to track skills at course level and across a whole program although few staff met by the panel were aware of the tool.
- One institution had 'retro-mapped' core skills against existing courses. The panel suggested that the university might wish to assess how robust this mapping process had been in practice and do further work mapping the core skills against teaching methods, including across different modes of delivery. An example where core skills had been proactively used in the design of a new program was in engineering. The university anticipated that this experience would provide a blueprint for future program development.



- At this institution, the Academic Board required that graduate attributes be taken into account in the accreditation and reaccreditation of courses. Schools reviewed the desired learning outcomes of their undergraduate programs and mapped these against the graduate attributes. The panel noted however, some inconsistency between the attributes and the university's flexible learning objectives. The former focused on developing applied skills for the world of work, while the latter emphasised the development of student 'creativity', 'deep learning' and 'independent learning'.



6. Policies and Mechanisms to Oversee Assessment

6.1 Policies to Guide Assessment Practice

Ideally, all universities should have clear assessment policies that apply across all academic units. At the time of their audit by AUQA, some institutions did not have assessment policies in place. Some allowed a great deal of devolved authority and decision making in relation to assessment and had no centralised systematic monitoring process. In such cases the audit panel often recommended the establishment of comprehensive processes by which the academic board could assure itself that the university's degrees were of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities.

Not only should policies be in place but good practice indicates that they should also be available and promoted to students as well as staff.

- For example, one university published its assessment policies as 'Codes of Practice' which acted as the quasi-legal gold standard for dealing with complaints or allegations of misconduct by either staff or students.

As with other areas of institutional policy, ensuring consistent adherence is an ongoing problem. The audit panel noted an interesting approach to dealing with this problem in regard to assessment through the use of a software technology which constrains staff options within policy parameters.

Assessment policies should also be part of the quality cycle undergoing regular review and revision as required. The example of one university is illustrative: this institution was commended by AUQA for its ongoing attention to assessment policy review. In 1996, the university carried out a comprehensive review of assessment policies and practices. The result was the adoption or affirmation of a wide range of practices and philosophies relating to such matters as criterion-referencing, the place of assessment and feedback in learning, the importance of staff development for teaching, and so on. In 2001, the Teaching and Learning Committee polled Deans and Heads of schools to ascertain progress on aspects of the 1996 recommendations relating to the quality assurance and quality control of assessment. As a result, it was decided that some of the intended procedures needed re-emphasising, and Academic Board formally adopted a model that paralleled the three-stage curriculum review process. Specifically, the three stages were to occur at school, faculty and University level respectively. The model aimed to ensure that: staff were trained to develop assessment linked to course goals and to prepare course profiles; course profiles contained the required information; timely feedback was provided to students on assessment tasks; and schools and faculties acted and reported on any failure of the normal quality assurance procedures.

This example, however was the exception rather than the rule, especially in relation to universities that had offshore and multiple campuses or that operated on a very devolved decision making model. In those cases, audit panels strongly recommended central policies and quality assurance procedures as well as external moderation of assessment to ensure confidence in the standards of graduates.

For example:

- The assessment policy of one multicampus institution required that "each faculty shall have rules for ensuring, as far as practicable, comparability of assessment within units between different markers, across all campuses, modes of enrolment, different periods of offer, and different cohorts at twinning and partner institutions" and that "assessment panels shall be responsible for ensuring assessment standards and comparability of assessment for all assessment tasks". The audit



panel supported the intention behind this policy as it provided an important quality assurance mechanism for the university, but noted that each faculty's rules varied considerably and suggested there would be benefit in consolidating the various approaches into one agreed policy to be applied consistently across the university but with sufficient flexibility to respond to different contexts.

- An extreme example of 'decentralisation' in assessment and course delivery was found at another university, which operates across multiple campuses. One subject might be offered simultaneously in numerous 'subject instances' which might have different coordinators with a high degree of autonomy. Instance coordinators could choose their own teaching materials, textbooks and assessment schedules. The guidelines required the use of moderation between subject instances, although the form of moderation was at the discretion of the coordinators and was not routinely practiced. There was sometimes little, if any, communication between the subject instance coordinators in different campuses and countries. The panel pointed out that, as a consequence, the university could not verify the equivalence of standards across instances. To overcome this problem, AUQA recommended that the university review the level of delegation to the coordinators of different subject instances, with a view to establishing systems that would ensure greater consistency across the various instances.
- At another predominantly single campus institution, faculty autonomy had resulted in a wide range of assessment practices. One faculty was benchmarking with other universities, another was using a fixed pass rate of 75 per cent as a means of addressing grade inflation. Some were using scaling techniques, others were implementing outcomes based education (OBE) and using criterion based learning methods, taking the view that norm-referencing is antithetical to OBE. The audit panel acknowledged that there may be valid reasons for different disciplines to favour different assessment approaches, but reinforced the need to ensure that the quality of assessment was equivalent throughout all schools, and that students were not disadvantaged by variations in assessment policy.

Even in those institutions where good policies were in place, audit panels noted the need for vigilance, indicating that, particularly where flexible delivery options and alternative articulation arrangements were available, problems associated with student assessment were likely to become more complex. Such flexible arrangements require more rigorous, systematic and transparent policies and processes and academic boards need to continue to have strong oversight of assessment issues.

- A good example of rigorous assessment in an institution that prizes flexibility was offered by a non-university provider where assessment was supported by a detailed approach to moderation. Internal moderation involved staff exchanging marked scripts and final approval of grades occurring only after documentation had been checked centrally. This institution was also embarking on a joint project on assessment with a university to review good practices in assessment nationally and, as appropriate, to adapt them for both institutions.

One audit report noted there were few if any systematic guidelines for accommodating the increasing number of Indigenous students who were seeking to undertake study and submit work for assessment using Indigenous perspectives, methods and even languages. This point is likely to become increasingly important within the sector.

In some cases, universities had guidelines in place for assessment and standards but relied heavily on external professional accreditation processes to ensure comparability of standards between their graduates and other Australian institutions through external accreditation processes. However, this approach does not cover non-accredited disciplines, and fails to take account of the need for self-accrediting institutions to take responsibility for their own standards. This feature appeared to be more common in institutions that had been



established as universities comparatively recently.

In a few other cases, the audit panel felt there was a risk of 'policy overkill':

- For example, at one university there was a robust and inclusive system for assessment policy development and review. However, the panel noted that once policies were in place, there seemed to be a high level of associated bureaucracy that required much effort and led to 'ticking boxes' in a superficial fashion. The panel noted that a great deal of paperwork was generated, and reporting requirements were extensive and detailed.

As students exercise increasing control over their own learning within an environment characterised by many more choices, institutional knowledge of outcomes becomes increasingly difficult. It is incumbent on each university to develop the necessary systems for tracking student learning outcomes and for the systems to be user-friendly and not impose further burdens on students. Potentially, policies to increase comparability, especially in multicampus environments, could be antithetical to student centred-learning, which requires a move to tailoring assessment requirements to the needs and interests of students in a way that will make statistical moderation more problematic, because students will not necessarily be undertaking common assessment tasks.

6.1.1 Consistency Across Multiple Campuses

Multicampus institutions face real difficulties in balancing inter-campus consistency with student centred learning and modern approaches to course delivery and assessment. In a number of cases, the legacy of amalgamation of previously independent organisations into a single university was still apparent. Some institutions had adopted an incremental approach moving from relative campus autonomy, to cooperative, and then centrally regulated policies.

- In one such case, the audit panel noted an historic differentiation of courses in some fields of study, with variant courses in the same field offered at different campuses, rather than a single multicampus course. This contributed to a perception, expressed by academic staff and stakeholders, of degrees from some campuses being of a higher standard, which is clearly not the university's intent. Hence, considerable effort was put into ensuring the equivalence of courses and units taught in different locations. In general terms, units offered across more than one mode or location were required to have equivalent curriculum and assessment standards. It was possible for a campus to adapt 20 per cent of a unit to their circumstances, but the modified unit must be submitted for approval through the normal approval processes. A new Policy for 'Academic Programs offered from Multiple Campuses' was approved by Academic Board to take effect from the 2007 academic year. The policy introduces strengthened requirements for naming of courses, course structure, conduct, entry and assessment. The policy includes course management groups that have representation from all campuses offering a particular course and that are responsible for oversight of the development and operation of the course across all campuses, as well as any specific campus variations.
- To address consistency across campuses, one university has introduced, and extended to all campuses, a policy of standardisation or 'grading on the curve', with indicated percentages expected in each grade to ensure that it is operating as a single institution, and that students are not disadvantaged (or advantaged) by attending one campus rather than another. Perennial concerns about such policies are mitigated by ensuring the policy only applies to classes of more than 30 students and major departures from the standard percentages have been accepted when supported by convincing explanation.
- Probably the most widespread assessment processes are operated by one university which, at the time of its audit, was running final examinations at 250



- Another institution with a high proportion of externally enrolled students aimed for consistent implementation of assessment and examinations across all learning modes. Exceptions to the general rule were permitted “based on the differences in the facilities and opportunities available to [different] groups of students”, and “provided that any alternative pieces of assessment must constitute comparable workloads for on-campus and external courses”. This university places considerable emphasis on ‘sameness’ rather than ‘equivalence’ as a strong quality assurance mechanism across its modes of delivery.

Another issue relevant to multicampus and distance education institutions is assessment turnaround time. AUQA reports identify a recurrent theme, arising from interviews with offshore and distance education students, that marking turnaround times were often longer than specified by the institutions’ own assessment policies, or that the specified times themselves are too long. As assessment plays such an important role in the learning process, efforts should be made to speed up cycle times so that students benefit from their assessment prior to submitting subsequent work.

6.1.2 External Cross-Location Marking or Moderation

External cross-location moderation is a feature of assessment policies in several universities. Notably, one university with campuses across Australia, implemented cross-marking between its own campuses and sample marking by academics external to the university. In other examples:

- Faculties at this institution had effective policies and procedures for moderation of results and for monitoring of student academic performance across locations, mostly through chief examiners and boards of examiners. At one overseas campus it was a formal requirement that examinations were marked by external examiners. Assessor training had been introduced at this campus for staff to prepare them for this task. AUQA encouraged the university to consider introducing moderation of assessment as a standard component of its university-level assessment policy, to further strengthen the degree of equivalence. The panel suggested that the approach adopted by overseas campus could serve as a model for the whole university.
- The university used criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced marking to reduce subjective differences between markers across 14 teaching locations. The audit panel commended the university for an effective system of moderation that was implemented consistently across all teaching sites. This system was a key element of the university’s quality assurance framework.
- One institution’s Assessment and Grading Policy sets out assessment expectations. Examination boards (some operating jointly for disciplines such as biotechnology) were responsible for the moderation of assessment outcomes. A Statement of Assessment Methods was developed for each topic, which provided for consultation with students on assessment arrangements. Other monitoring mechanisms for assessment standards included professional accreditation, employer surveys, and a recent honours benchmarking exercise.

6.1.3 Assessment and Academic Integrity

Most universities have policies on plagiarism and audit panels noted that considerable efforts have been made to keep staff and students informed about those policies. Some universities were using plagiarism detection software. A number of institutions placed greater reliance on



invigilated examinations rather than take home assignments to reduce the potential impact of expected plagiarism.

- AUQA commended one university for the development of an Academic Integrity Management Strategy that had contributed to a high level of awareness of the university's plagiarism policy among staff and students, including students offshore. In addition to revising the Policy on Academic Integrity and associated procedures, the strategy involved development of protocols for the use of electronic text matching software by staff, and an online interactive package and quiz (completed by approximately 3000 students at the discretion of topic coordinators) to assist in understanding and exercising academic integrity.
- One institution's Institute for Interactive Media and Learning had developed a 'Preventing Plagiarism' resource kit and other resources to provide guidance to staff on promoting academic integrity in course design. The kit provided advice on ways to detect plagiarism, including use of the Turnitin™ plagiarism detection software available under licence. The student association had noted its concerns over the potential for punitive rather than educative use of electronic plagiarism detection software. The panel recommended that the university issue clear guidelines on the use of Turnitin™, explaining how plagiarism detection software will be used to assist students improve their academic practice, how it will be used in assessment, and how it will be used in examining allegations of plagiarism.
- One university had established an 'Academic Honesty' project, which included a web portal to help students learn the conventions of scholarship.



7. Academic Benchmarking and Quality Assurance

From AUQA first cycle audit reports, implementation of academic benchmarking and uses of quantitative indicators to monitor institutional performance was patchy across the Australian higher education system, although all universities monitor their performance against a small number of standard measures in national data sets.

Some evidence of benchmarking activities occurring across different areas of universities was found, but less evidence was available that these processes had been used to identify improvement opportunities and improve performance outcomes.

An extended coverage of the general theme of higher education benchmarking as reflected in AUQA audit reports is provided in the 2007 AUQA Occasional Publication 13, *Benchmarking in Australian Higher Education: A Thematic Analysis of AUQA Audit Reports.*)

7.1 Current benchmarking activities

There is a broad range of interpretation of what the term benchmarking means. In one instance a panel noted that the institution's 'benchmarks for teaching standards' were in fact simply procedural rules. It is possible that different audit panels also used different definitions of the term. One panel noted very little structured benchmarking, which it defined as *a well-developed process for adapting good practice from elsewhere to improve one's own performance.*

Before embarking on identification of comparator institutions, it is important that universities have clarity about what is meant by benchmarking and the intended outcomes of the process so as to choose appropriate partners for comparison. For example:

- One university had developed a 'Framework for Benchmarking in Teaching and Learning, Research, and Research Training' which proposed a definition for benchmarking and outlined some guiding principles on how, and with whom, benchmarking activity might be pursued.

Even in some universities which explicitly benchmark against peer universities in Australia and internationally, audit panels not infrequently commented on the need for a more systematic approach to benchmarking – one that was aligned to planned outcomes, and able to support the university in monitoring whether it was meeting its objectives and in identifying gaps that warranted attention. It was also pointed out that formal strategies for benchmarking could more thoroughly encourage its use as a development tool for improvement.

Favourable comment was made by audit panels about the participation of university libraries in the National Resource Sharing Work Group benchmarking project and in other comparative measures of library performance.

Commonly, audit panels pointed to the desirability of establishing, at the institutional level, a comprehensive process to ensure that degrees were of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities. International comparisons were rarely formally embedded in university quality assurance systems. Panels also recommended that various universities give priority to establishing a peer group of institutions for the purposes of strategic and performance benchmarking at institutional and program levels.

In some cases, benchmarking systems that were implemented in universities were not extended beyond the main campus, particularly when other campuses were distant from the main campus or overseas. The point was also made that internal benchmarking, for example comparison of retention and attrition rates for each and every campus, could help to monitor the consistency and quality of the experience on different campuses.



7.2 Developmental Trends in Benchmarking

University governing bodies are increasingly expressing interest in being able to rapidly sum up the comparative performance of their university.

Consortia of universities have also emerged as helpful groups for benchmarking, including the Group of Eight (Go8), the Australian Technology Network (ATN), and the Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) group. Another group, the New Generation Universities (NGU) group, subsequently disbanded, although its members continue to pursue benchmarking activities. As examples:

- At the time of audit, one university had established a number of benchmarking relationships including joining the former NGU group to obtain comparative information across a range of activities and processes, and had distilled its experience into *A Benchmarking Framework: Ongoing Development* (October 2002), a resource designed to assist staff with their benchmarking activities.
- Another university had undertaken work with other members of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in benchmarking research but, at the time of its audit, noted that it had been involved in relatively limited benchmarking which had generally been restricted to data comparisons rather than structured comparisons of process and practice.

7.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms

The study of AUQA audit reports suggests that most higher education institutions have quality assurance systems which are primarily directed towards on-campus programs. Where there are programs with special features such as delivery to multiple campuses or distance delivery (flexible learning), the assumption often appeared to be that no special quality assurance accommodation needed to be made. Audit panels mostly, but not always, made enquiry into these matters and, more often than not, uncovered issues.

In general terms, there is often a tension for higher education institutions between a desire to standardise programs and retaining sufficient flexibility for appropriate forms of customisation. In such cases, audit panels recommended the need for systematic staff discussion, so that shared understandings could emerge. In dual sector institutions, panels also observed the need for universities to develop clear policy to guide teaching in different pedagogic frameworks, specifically between vocational education and training and higher education.

- One university had instituted a review to find ways of ensuring that programs offered at different campuses were equivalent in terms of program objectives and outcomes. Faculty-specific reviews were undertaken in each faculty, overseen by the deans, to examine whether programs were delivered consistently across campuses. In discussions with staff, it was evident to the panel that there was considerable confusion about what constituted 'equivalence', with some staff interpreting equivalence to mean that content should be identical.
- Another had conducted a review of its satellite campuses to ensure that academic policies and quality assurance systems were applied equally across them. At the time of the audit visit, the audit panel was advised that the degree rules for some programs offered at one satellite campus were still inconsistent with degree rules for programs offered at the other campus. A number of challenges and interesting issues for academic quality assurance were raised by the fact that one campus had several different providers operating from it. For example, some university staff were teaching in both vocational education and training and higher education courses, which raised questions of how staff understand and incorporate pedagogic



differences in their teaching and assessment practices. A need for guided professional discussions about this issue was identified.

7.3.1 Quality Assurance for International Education

Many universities have an 'internationalisation' objective that identifies the broadest range of potential benefits to students as well as the institutions themselves. Evaluation of whether these broader objectives have been achieved is, however, rare.

Quality assurance on overseas campuses and other offshore teaching locations posed considerable difficulties for many, as well as a reputational risk for some. An extended coverage of the general theme of internationalisation of higher education as reflected in AUQA audit reports is provided in the 2008 AUQA Occasional Publication 14, *Internationalisation of Australian Universities: Learning from Cycle 1 Audits*.

In a large number of audits AUQA recommended that the academic board take a more active role in the ongoing close scrutiny of the academic aspects of programs taught offshore and develop a detailed academic quality assurance framework for all offshore ventures. Many aspects of offshore teaching, including both management and academic issues, were identified as needing attention in individual audit reports. AUQA panels have commented that often a university's strategic framework for internationalisation provided no rationale or parameters for the countries in which they operate.

For offshore teaching with partner organisations, a common weakness was the lack of a comprehensive agreement with an international partner institution that covered all aspects of programs relevant to their quality assurance. In other cases, while agreements or memoranda of understanding with offshore partners included expectations of the student support and facilities that the partner would provide (such as library resources, computers, text books, classroom equipment and laboratory equipment), documented processes for ensuring these expectations were being met were often not in place. Similarly, processes for comparing the admission standards and performance of onshore and offshore students were often missing.

In several instances, AUQA recommended that universities develop principles to guide the development, management and monitoring of transnational programs and partnerships, including probity and due diligence procedures, and the maintenance of consistent and appropriate admission standards, including English competency. Inadequate induction and preparation of inexperienced teachers was also identified as a deficiency in several cases. It is worth noting that institutions' own self-reviews often had revealed serious issues in relation to compliance with academic policies for offshore ventures.

An important distinction noted in at least one case is the need for courses offered by overseas partners to belong to the parent Australian institution, rather than being 'accredited' by the Australian institution. Paragraph 16 of the 2007 National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes states that *"Universities and other self-accrediting institutions do not have the power to accredit the courses of other institutions."*



8. Conclusion

It is clear that all Australian institutions have made significant progress in raising the profile of teaching and learning to its appropriate place as core activity. While strategic plans rarely engage the specifics, all universities either had a well-developed teaching and learning plan at the time of their audit or were well advanced in the process.

In this first cycle of audits it was apparent that, with a few notable exceptions, much of the institutional effort had been expended at the 'front end' of the process, in developing and refining policies, plans and processes related to teaching and learning. Closing the loop, implementation, evaluation and feedback were less well developed. In the second cycle audits more detailed and explicit emphasis on evidence, outcomes and their use in improving performance can be expected.

In this first round it was apparent that most institutions were struggling with consistent approaches to teaching and learning for multicampus and offshore teaching and assessment. Equally, there was scant attention by many institutions to flexible, student-centred delivery and the special challenges it holds for quality assurance of the learning experience.

The other challenge which presents itself clearly throughout these audit reports is the gulf between the policy makers and senior decision-makers in universities and the teachers and academic administrators at academic unit level. In large and devolved institutions the gulf is harder to bridge. Many audit reports drew attention to the failure of policies to be acknowledged or implemented at unit level.

The problem is often framed as one of communication but, in reality, it is more complex and goes to the heart of the culture of the institution. When all levels in the institution truly believe that quality teaching and learning is core business, all levels will be involved in development, implementation and evaluation of quality assurance processes. Given the inevitability of staff turnover the task is never-ending and must be built into all aspects of the institution's functioning.

The importance of strong leadership by a vice-chancellor committed to teaching and learning quality cannot be over-emphasised and was evident on the first round audits. Genuine commitment was signalled in those institutions that attached a quantum of core funding to performance on indicators of teaching and learning quality outcomes.

In summary, future assessments of institutional performance in teaching and learning should seek evidence of:

- strategic plans that acknowledge the teaching and learning responsibility
- teaching and learning plans and policies that articulate a vision for achieving strategic goals in teaching and learning
- simple mechanisms for collecting evidence of performance against plans and feeding back for improvement
- mechanisms to link unit funding to outcomes in teaching and learning
- evidence of effective uptake of policies and ownership of objectives at all levels in the institution
- oversight of all aspects of academic quality, through specialist committees, by the academic governing body
- reporting and accountability mechanisms that foster compliance with policies



- external and professional involvement in course design and review
- mechanisms for course design and review that are linked with resource planning
- compliance with a designated schedule of course and unit reviews according to a designated process
- well-developed systems for ensuring comparability between delivery modes and locations
- policies that reward individuals for excellent performance in teaching and learning
- policies that reward academic units for teaching and learning related outcomes and compliance with quality assurance policies
- clear definitions of the purposes and processes for benchmarking and identified peer institutions for benchmarking partnerships
- a formal strategy to embed benchmarking as a development tool within a university culture of improvement
- descriptions of benchmarking processes and evidence of actions following outcomes
- clearly defined graduate attributes, mechanisms for ensuring that they are embedded in curriculum and for assessing their achievement, and
- well-defined policies on all aspects of assessment and evidence of compliance.



Appendix 1: Cycle 1 AUQA Audit Reports

Date of Audit Report	Institution
October 2002	University of Southern Queensland
October 2002	Curtin University
October 2002	Australian Maritime College
November 2002	University of Ballarat
December 2002	Australian Catholic University
January 2003	The University of Newcastle
March 2003	University of Adelaide
March 2003	Swinburne University
June 2003	University of Canberra
July 2003	Macquarie University
September 2003	University of Queensland
October 2003	Southern Cross University
November 2003	Notre Dame University
December 2003	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
April 2004	Griffith University
April 2004	University of Western Australia
May 2004	The University of New England
August 2004	University of South Australia
September 2004	James Cook University
October 2004	Edith Cowan University
November 2004	Charles Sturt University
December 2004	The University of Sydney
February 2005	Deakin University
February 2005	Bond University
March 2005	La Trobe University
August 2005	Queensland University of Technology
September 2005	Melbourne College of Divinity
October 2005	Charles Darwin University
November 2005	University of Tasmania
January 2006	The University of Melbourne
February 2006	Central Queensland University
March 2006	University of Wollongong
March 2006	University of New South Wales
June 2006	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
August 2006	Murdoch University
August 2006	University of Technology, Sydney
December 2006	The Flinders University of South Australia
December 2006	Monash University
December 2006	Victoria University
January 2007	University of Western Sydney
February 2007	University of the Sunshine Coast
March 2007	Australian Film Television and Radio School
November 2007	Australian National University



Appendix 2: Commendations from AUQA Good Practice Database

Title	Commended practice	Institution
Academic Integrity Management Strategy	A coherent system for education about and management of academic integrity that provides a systematic and consistent strategy for setting and managing the consequences of academic dishonesty.	The Flinders University of South Australia
Academic Board Quality Management Framework	The quality management framework guides the Board in ensuring that the academic goals of the University of Technology, Sydney, are being achieved, and gives structure to the Board's continuous improvement.	University of Technology, Sydney
Academic Staff Development Publications	The University of New England's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) produces a range of academic staff development publications to assist staff to develop their skills in learning management	The University of New England
Assessment moderation procedures	To: i) ensure assessment that is fair, equitable and reliable ii) attain a standard that is both current and comparable nation wide iii) obtain feedback from stakeholders iv) produce graduates who are successful in obtaining employment in their chosen fields, are equipped to move along a career path and become agents of change.	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
Bilingual Programs	The goal is to ensure and assure the quality of Edith Cowan University (ECU) courses conducted using both English and a foreign language.	Edith Cowan University
CATLyst Network for Flexible Teaching and Learning	The CATLyst network is designed to provide a link between teaching and learning development at central and faculty levels. It provides direct support to schools and faculties as they introduce new strategic teaching initiatives, particularly those formulated by the University's Teaching and Learning Committee	The University of Western Australia



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Cross Campus Collaboration in Nursing Education	The goal is to ensure consistency and quality in the teaching and learning experience for students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and midwifery education at all campuses of La Trobe University (LTU).	La Trobe University
Developing Graduate Attributes: Information Literacies Introductory Program (ILIP)	Information Literacies Introductory Program (ILIP) aims to provide the foundation for systematic and ongoing development of the University of Wollongong (UOW) Graduate Attribute of information literacy and to support the principle of lifelong learning by equipping students with appropriate skills at the commencement of their degree, to recognise the need for information and determine the nature and extent of the information needed.	University of Wollongong
Educational Design and Development for Quality Learning	To provide teaching staff with a template for an integrated support system. The system helps them to develop the skills, capacities and knowledge required for sound curriculum design and effective teaching across the range of teaching settings. It recognises the importance of curricula built on the alignment of desired learning outcomes with assessment tasks and learning and teaching activities, in any mix of flexible learning options on offer.	Southern Cross University
Embedding Graduate Attributes in Course Curricula	Embedding graduate attributes supports the key University strategy: to provide coursework curricula that are pedagogically sound, academically coherent, robust and relevant for society and the learner. The aim is to equip students with life skills and perspectives which are valued by employers and the community at large by ensuring that all undergraduate degrees address each attribute every year so that development is scaffolded and reinforced.	Murdoch University
Ensuring Awareness of Plagiarism Policy	The Academic Board of the University of New England (UNE) embarked on an extensive consultative process to develop a new policy for handling plagiarism by students. The institutional objective was to curb the incidence of plagiarism and provide clear and fair procedures for handling allegations.	The University of New England
eSKILLS UNE	eSKILLS UNE is a suite of information literacy materials on the web.	The University of New England



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Faculty of Science Talented Student Program (TSP)	The aim of the Talented Student Program (TSP) is to offer students of exceptional merit, particularly those whose talent is broad-based across science, additional challenging material to enable them to maximise their intellectual growth and potential.	The University of Sydney
External Moderation	The external moderation processes of the College are designed to ensure that academic quality is maintained across the ACTh network, objectives for each unit are addressed in the way students are assessed, grade descriptors for each unit are uniformly and consistently applied by markers in each college, and graduate attributes are likely to be attained.	Australian College of Theology
Foundation Units in Undergraduate Courses	The primary purpose of Foundation Units is to enable students new to Murdoch University to develop a range of generic learning skills and attitudes in a context that develops an interdisciplinary conceptual understanding. These units provide a foundation for subsequent university study and a basis for the development of Murdoch University's Graduate Attributes.	Murdoch University
Foundations of University Teaching Course	The University of Wollongong (UOW) Foundations of University Teaching course, Introduction to Tertiary Teaching (ITT), is a key initiative supporting the ongoing development of a high quality learning and teaching environment. Newly appointed academic teaching staff are required to participate as part of their employment contract and sessional teaching staff are encouraged to attend	University of Wollongong
Graduate Attribute Mapping in Programs	A graduate attribute mapping process was adopted in February 2002 by the University's Academic Board to complement the revised set of graduate attributes approved in 2001. Mapping graduate attributes and embedding them within programs and courses supports and encourages teaching staff explicitly to reflect on where students will develop the attributes within programs and courses, and how this will be done.	The University of Queensland
Indigenous Education: Helping Indigenous Students to Achieve Success	The goal of the Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies is to provide an environment that nurtures the unique cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that ensures the growth of knowledge and awareness for all Australians.	University of Newcastle



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Industry Advisory Board: School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management	The La Trobe University (LTU) Strategic Plan 2004 contains several defining features relevant to the development and management of an Industry Advisory Board. First the Industry Advisory Board seeks to bolster the vocational and professional awareness of school staff. Second, it aims to improve the integration of contemporary industrial issues with the school's teaching syllabus. Third, the Industry Advisory Board is designed to bolster relations with key industry members to enhance the reputation of and opportunities afforded to LTU graduates.	La Trobe University
Industry-Based Learning (IBL)	The Industry-Based Learning (IBL) program provides undergraduate students with opportunities to learn while working in paid jobs for either 6 or 12 months. It is based on a partnership model; the University and employer partners participate in the program for mutual benefit.	Swinburne University of Technology
Integrating Graduate Attributes into UNE Courses	The processes to support the incorporation of graduate attributes into University of New England (UNE) courses aim to facilitate academic staff understanding of the integral role that graduate attributes play in developing students' generic skills and readiness for employment. At the same time, they also aim to enable students to recognise and value their own development of these skills.	The University of New England
Internal and External Input in Course and Unit Development	The goal of this practice is to ensure that each of the degree programs of Australian Catholic University (ACU) meets its stated objectives, that the objectives are in accord with the Mission and Strategic Plan and that the course and component units achieve the optimal learning outcomes for students in a cost-effective manner.	Australian Catholic University
Learning Effectiveness Alliance Program	The aim of the Learning Effectiveness Alliance Program (LEAP) is to facilitate the collective long-term improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in Curtin University of Technology schools and departments through a centrally sponsored quality enhancement project.	Curtin University of Technology



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Multi Campus/Teaching Site Roles and Responsibilities	The purpose of the Multi Campus/Teaching Site Roles and Responsibilities document is to provide a consistent process to deliver quality courses and programs across all Central Queensland University (CQU) campuses and teaching sites onshore and offshore.	Central Queensland University
Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program	The Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program, which commenced in 2003 and operated for two years, was aimed at providing academic staff with an opportunity to engage in the development of online teaching and learning environments.	Deakin University
Pathway Programs Preparing Students for Further Study	Monash offers a number of pathway programs that are designed to prepare students effectively for university-level study, among them the offerings of Monash College which is part of Monash College Group Pty Ltd, and the Academic Development Programme (ADP) at the South Africa campus, Monash South Africa (MSA).	Monash University
Pathways to Enable Equity Student Entry	Murdoch University's equity entry programs provide access, transition and support for students from diverse and different backgrounds, to enable them to enter undergraduate courses and to participate fully and independently in the academic, cultural and social life of the University	Murdoch University
Peer Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS)	The goal of this program is to provide peer-assisted sessions in which a student leader conducts activities that assist students to learn course content and study skill techniques.	University of Southern Queensland
Quality Assurance Systems in Transnational Education	Quality assurance and the continuous improvement of the University's educational programs are fundamental to the mission of the University of South Australia (UniSA). For transnational education, this begins with the business development process and is then subsumed by the teaching and learning framework. This framework requires individual academics and teaching teams to review content, focus and outcomes of their courses, reflect on their teaching through feedback from students and other stakeholders, and make improvements as required	University of South Australia



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Resolutions on the Assessment and Examination of Coursework	<p>The purpose of this policy is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to assessment and examination of coursework award courses and units of study to identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles are implemented to be a resource document containing all Academic Board policies relating to assessment and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework 	The University of Sydney
Student Entrance Pathways: Combo Courses	The primary purpose of the Combo Courses is to attract adult learners, initially into further education and then into Murdoch University, in a region renowned for its low participation rate at all levels of education. Provision of a TAFE-level course with University units embedded provides both the confidence-boost needed and reinforces early success by formal qualification	Murdoch University
Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning	The goal of the University of Tasmania's Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) scheme is to provide a systematic and centrally supported process for obtaining student feedback on teaching, and on the units offered by the University.	University of Tasmania
Supporting, Enhancing and Rewarding Teaching Practice	In order to encourage and reward teaching excellence, and to create and maintain a teaching and learning environment of the highest standard, the University of Tasmania has introduced a system of teaching awards and teaching development funding. The awards process allows for the identification of champions in teaching and learning, while the Teaching Development Fund facilitates teaching improvement and innovation in teaching practice.	University of Tasmania
Teaching Induction Program	At the broadest level, the teaching induction program (TIP) at James Cook University (JCU) is designed to be part of an integrated suite of induction practices which respectfully acknowledge the expertise and experience of new academic staff, while building an awareness of the JCU educational context, including the student profile and policy context.	James Cook University



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Teaching Internship Scheme for Postgraduate Students	The Teaching Internship Scheme for Postgraduate Students, introduced in 2000, relates to two key institutional priorities: extension of the teaching-research nexus, and the recruitment and retention of high-quality students.	The University of Western Australia
Teaching Quality Appraisal (Performance-based Funding)	<p>The Teaching Quality Appraisal (TQA) scheme is an important element of the quality assurance framework of the University of Queensland (UQ). Introduced in 1997, it provides a way of evaluating progress on teaching quality initiatives identified in the Teaching & Learning Enhancement Plan (TLEP)</p> <p>The TQA scheme is based on the principle of linking funding to the quality of teaching. It focused initially on the processes and structures for ensuring teaching quality.</p> <p>The scheme operates at faculty level. Faculties are expected to distribute five per cent of their coursework teaching load component allocations on the basis of a questionnaire-based assessment of teaching quality in their constituent schools.</p>	University of Queensland
Teaching Quantum for Performance-based Funding	The Teaching Quantum funding arrangement is intended to ensure that the teaching and learning aspects of faculty plans, practices and outcomes are closely aligned with the strategic priorities of the University of New England (UNE), as set out in the UNE Strategic Plan 2002-2006 and the current UNE Teaching and Learning Plan. A further aim of the Teaching Quantum procedure is to ensure that where a need for improvement is identified in the area of teaching and learning, an effective plan is developed to address this need and funding is made available to support its implementation	The University of New England
Teaching@ECU: The Little Red Book	This good practice aims to assist new or experienced Edith Cowan University (ECU) academic staff members to become more knowledgeable and effective in the academic teaching environment at the University	Edith Cowan University



Title	Commended practice	Institution
Tracking and Improvement in Learning and Teaching System (TILT)	Management information is derived from a range of sources to identify and address key areas of good practice for wider dissemination and key areas for improvement. This information is seen as being essential to ensure that decision-making, planning, review and quality management throughout the University is evidence-based. To address this need the University of Western Sydney (UWS) system for Tracking and Improving Learning and Teaching (TILT) has been developed.	University of Western Sydney
TRACKS Indigenous Tertiary Preparation Program	The goal of the TRACKS tertiary preparation program is to enhance Indigenous students' access to the University of New England (UNE) and to assist students in a successful transition to university courses.	The University of New England
Unit and Teaching Evaluation Instrument (UTEI)	The goal is to develop and regularly administer a single, machine-readable Unit and Teaching Evaluation Instrument (UTEI) to provide an ongoing source of information about units and their teaching.	Edith Cowan University
Unit Packs for External Programs	The aim of this practice is to ensure consistent documentation of information required by students, academic staff and the University's external and offshore partners for the successful delivery of programs outside Victoria, including offshore.	La Trobe University
Unit Plans	The Unit Plan document provides a clear statement that advises students on the unit aims and scope, relevant policies (eg academic integrity) and the resources and support available to them. The Unit Plan identifies the administrative and general information a student needs to complete the unit	Edith Cowan University
University of Newcastle Industry Scholarship Scheme (UNISS)	The University of Newcastle Industry Scholarship Scheme (UNISS) sets out to produce high-quality professionals who are ready for industry. This is achieved using a combination of academic studies and work placement. The resulting combination of professional education and industrial experience provides scholars with skills and knowledge well beyond those of a new graduate.	University of Newcastle

