

AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITIES
QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
The Australian College of Theology

January 2007

AUQA Audit Report Number 50

ISBN 978 1 877090 67 7

© Australian Universities Quality Agency 2007

Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Ph 03 9664 1000
Fax 03 9639 7377

admin@auqa.edu.au

<http://www.auqa.edu.au>

The Australian Universities Quality Agency receives financial support from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT	1
Background	1
The Audit Process	1
CONCLUSIONS.....	3
Introduction to Findings.....	3
Commendations.....	4
Affirmations	4
Recommendations	5
1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE.....	6
1.1 Institutional and Educational Objectives	7
1.2 Institutional Governance	8
2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS	10
2.1 Teaching and Learning.....	10
2.2 Scholarship and Creative Activity	12
3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING AND OTHER CORE ACTIVITIES	13
3.1 Organisational Structures and Decision Making.....	13
3.2 Academic Staff.....	14
3.3 Support for Student Learning.....	14
3.4 Information Resources	15
4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT	16
4.1 Leadership.....	16
4.2 Review and Evaluation	17
4.3 Planning and Managing for Quality	18
APPENDIX A: THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY.....	21
APPENDIX B: AUQA’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VALUES AND VISION	22
APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL	24
APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS.....	25

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2003 the Australian Government introduced the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) to allow students in non self-accrediting higher education institutions to receive financial assistance for their students' tuition fees through the FEE-HELP program.

Non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs) approved under the HESA for this purpose have become known as higher education providers, or HEPs¹. The HESA requires that HEPs in receipt of FEE-HELP funds must meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audit by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines.

At the time of the Australian College of Theology (hereinafter ACTh or 'the College') audit, the Guidelines listed only the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as an approved quality auditor. So, early in 2006 AUQA appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of the ACTh. The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has developed an approach to the audit of non-self-accrediting HEPs for HESA purposes after consultation with the sector. This audit of ACTh is the first pilot of that approach and, subject to a review of that approach, represents a substantive quality audit under the HESA.

This Report of the ACTh audit provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, recommendations, affirmations and commendations. A brief introduction to the ACTh is given in Appendix A; the mission, objectives, values and vision of AUQA are shown in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C. Appendix D defines abbreviations and technical terms used in this Report.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits on each organisation's own objectives, together with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* (National Protocols) <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/>, and other relevant legal requirements or codes to which the organisation is committed. However, because NSAIs do not accredit their own courses (which are accredited by state and territory accreditation agencies), a detailed examination of this aspect of academic quality assurance against the National Protocols was deemed to be beyond the scope of this particular audit.

HEP audits under the HESA conducted by AUQA are structured around consideration of institutional performance assessed against the institution's objectives and these are also checked against criteria that are set out in a set of four 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The primary purpose of the QAFs is to provide the HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance which will be considered during the HEP quality audit process. ACTh structured its Performance Portfolio: Report of Self-Review (henceforth 'Portfolio') following the QAFs, and this Report also follows the main topic headings provided by the QAFs.

On 15 September 2006, ACTh presented its submission to AUQA, including a 58 page account of its self-review; 12 Appendices; 37 Supplementary Materials; and five Additional Materials. The Audit Panel met in Melbourne on 9 October to consider these materials.

¹ Although universities and a small number of other self-accrediting institutions are also 'higher education providers', the term 'HEP' is to be understood in this Report as applying only to non-self accrediting higher education providers.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and Audit Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to ACTh on 20 October. During that visit, a series of questions for clarification and requested additional documents were discussed. The shape of the Audit Visit program was also developed. Because ACTh is a consortium, it was agreed that there would be visits both to the ACTh main office, and to a sample of ACTh affiliated colleges, in New South Wales, and in other locations. A total of 62 Supplementary Materials were provided by the auditee during the course of the audit.

The main Audit Visit took place in Sydney over 16-17 November. The Panel visited the ACTh main office in the Sydney CBD on the first morning, and then visited Morling College in Eastwood that afternoon. On the morning of the second day the Panel visited the Sydney Missionary and Bible College in Croydon, and returned to the ACTh main office in the afternoon to conclude the audit. In addition, various delegations of the Panel visited the following affiliated colleges: Bible College of New Zealand (Auckland, 24 October); Malyon College (Brisbane, 31 October); Bible College of South Australia & South Australian Graduate School of Theology (Adelaide, 9 November); and Ridley College (Melbourne, 15 November).

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with approximately 120 people during these audit visits, including key senior academic and administrative staff from the ACTh secretariat and affiliated colleges; teaching and learning support staff from the sample affiliated colleges; a cross-section of their undergraduate and postgraduate students; and a sample of external stakeholders and community representatives. Sessions were also available for any member of the entire ACTh community to meet the Audit Panel and one person from one of the affiliated colleges took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended 17 November 2006 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by ACTh as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of ACTh's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of audit findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. 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, whether in respect of approach, deployment or results, which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by ACTh, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. It is acknowledged that recommendations in this Audit Report may have resource implications, and that this can pose difficulties for the College. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise these recommendations, and recognises that it is the responsibility of ACTh to respond in a manner consistent with its local context.

A brief word on terminology in the body of the Report: Some of the College's documentation refers to the College by their preferred acronym 'ACT'. For this audit AUQA has adopted the acronym ACTh to avoid ambiguity with the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). To distinguish between the auditee (ACTh) and its affiliated colleges, the terms 'the College' (upper case, designating the ACTh) and 'the college / colleges' (lower case, designating the affiliated colleges) will be used respectively.

Quotations taken from the Portfolio are referred to in shorthand as (PF p), and Supplementary Material as (SM).

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other favourable comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

With respect to ACTh's institutional and educational objectives, AUQA notes in particular the College's objective to achieve self-accrediting institutional status, and a possible ambition to gain modified university title under the new *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*. The Audit Panel reviewed the College's Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values, and Vision and commended the consortium's evident commitment to them.

In relation to institutional governance, AUQA notes positively the initiatives taken by the College to ensure compliance with the National Governance Protocols and NSW Department of Education and Training's reaccreditation requirements, but in light of these developments, recommends that the College's institutional objectives be reviewed to ensure that they focus clearly on desired outcomes for the achievement of self-accrediting institutional status.

With respect to teaching and learning, and other core functions, AUQA finds the quality of the ACTh student experience to be commendable through an obvious commitment by the affiliated colleges to a student-centred approach, and in terms of quality assurance, AUQA commends the well-developed approach to the moderation of student assessments. However, the Audit Panel urges the College to adopt a more strategic approach to its high-level academic planning, through the development of a consortium-wide learning and teaching plan, and a research and scholarship management plan.

As far as organisational structures, decision-making processes, and resources to support teaching and learning and other core activities are concerned, AUQA affirms the decision taken to strengthen the College's existing board and committee structure, and the willingness of the College to support flexible learning through distance education; but recommends that the College's Theological Academic Management System (TAMS) be further developed for the collection and more systematic monitoring and reporting on quality processes and outcomes.

In maintaining the College's commitment to quality improvement, AUQA notes positively the leadership provided through the Office of the Dean and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and affirms the adoption of a more robust and centralised approach to quality assurance. In line with these developments, the Audit Panel recommends that, in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh adopt a common student evaluation of teaching instrument, and a formal external stakeholder survey. The College is also commended for having positively embraced the requirement to undergo quality audit under the HESA as an opportunity to undertake an authentic whole-of-institution self-review.

Finally, to assist the College to plan and manage quality more effectively, as will be required to achieve self-accrediting institutional status, AUQA recommends the development of a consortium-wide Quality Assurance Implementation Plan, and a companion change-management communication strategy. The Audit Panel also affirms the need for ACTh to ensure that the strong quality culture that has been gathered under the leadership of its current Dean and CEO is not lost.

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. These are not prioritised by the Audit Panel. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

1. AUQA commends the ACTh secretariat and the affiliated colleges for the positive relationships they have established, based on an understanding of, and mutual respect for the College’s institutional and educational objectives, and what each body contributes to the ACTh consortium as a whole.7
2. AUQA commends ACTh for adopting a proactive stance towards reforming the corporate governance arrangements that exist under its current constitution and the requirements of canon law of the Anglican Church.8
3. AUQA commends ACTh for the quality of the student experience provided through the affiliated colleges, including the colleges’ commitment to the provision of a student-centred approach to learning and teaching and to the importance of feedback on student assessment.10
4. AUQA commends ACTh for its assessment moderation process as the centrepiece of its academic quality management system, which has been made more robust through the establishment of an Academic Audit Committee.11
5. AUQA commends the leadership of the Office of the Dean and CEO of ACTh in establishing and nurturing an organisational culture characterised by a strong commitment to quality assurance and improvement, while valuing flexibility and diversity of mission among the affiliated colleges.16
6. AUQA commends ACTh for positively embracing the requirement to undergo quality audit under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* as an opportunity to undertake an authentic whole-of-institution self-review in order to assist the College achieve its objectives.18

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms ACTh’s decision to revise and strengthen the College’s existing board and committee structure.14
2. AUQA affirms the willingness of the College to support the provision of distance education as witnessed at Morling College: and as reported at Malyon College; the Bible College of Victoria; and Ridley College.15
3. AUQA affirms ACTh’s decision to introduce a more robust and centralised approach to quality assurance including: involving the new single Academic Board in the approval of the appointment of academic staff to lecture at all levels; stronger monitoring and reporting of academic performance through the MOUs, five year reviews and annual reports; and development of arrangements for the benchmarking of academic performance across the consortium, and externally.17
4. AUQA affirms the need for ACTh to develop a risk-managed, succession plan for the current Dean and CEO, to ensure that the momentum for quality assurance and improvement that has been gathered is sustained throughout the College in the longer term.19

Recommendations

1. As the College plans to seek self-accrediting institutional status, AUQA recommends that ACTh review its statement of institutional objectives to ensure that they focus clearly on desired ends, including those that will be required for self-accrediting institutional status.....9
2. AUQA recommends that the ACTh secretariat enter into immediate discussions with the affiliated colleges in order to develop a comprehensive consortium-wide learning and teaching plan.11
3. AUQA recommends that ACTh establish a task force to develop a comprehensive consortium-wide research and scholarship management plan, that will establish priorities and targets for the development of an enhanced ACTh research and scholarship profile.12
4. AUQA recommends that ACTh investigate the further development of the Theological Academic Management System so that it can be used as an effective information management system, for the collection and more systematic monitoring and reporting on quality processes and outcomes.15
5. AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh adopt a common student evaluation of teaching instrument with a core of common assessment items and a bank of elective questions that can be customised by the affiliated colleges to take into account different delivery modes and institutional contexts.18
6. AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh develop a common external stakeholder survey with a core of common items and a bank of elective items that can be customised by the affiliated colleges to take into account the different college missions, organisational cultures, and traditions.18
7. AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh develop a consortium-wide quality assurance implementation plan to address the many improvement actions identified by the College in its self-review, and including the findings of this Audit Report.....19
8. AUQA recommends that ACTh develop a comprehensive change-management communication strategy to ensure that planned changes to be introduced are fully known and understood across the consortium.19

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Australian College of Theology's Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision and the Strategic Plan 2007–2009 both include the following statements with respect to institutional and educational objectives and governance:

Mission

- *exercise leadership in providing programs of demonstrable quality in Christian theological education.*

Vision

- *The College's courses, academic policies, and quality processes will be regarded by its institutional peers, by ordaining and ministerial accrediting bodies, churches, mission and pastoral care agencies and other employers of graduates and by the public as comparable with best practice in the self-accrediting tertiary sphere; and*
- *The College will be in a position to secure self-accrediting status and modified university title in accordance with the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (July 2006).*

As AUQA audits are intended to assist organisations to achieve their mission, objectives, and vision, supporting ACTh in its pursuit of these goals became an important consideration for the Audit Panel. To this end, the findings of this Report are designed to help the College to identify the quality assurance mechanisms that will be important for it to achieve self-accrediting status. This intention is consistent with reviewing ACTh's current arrangements for quality assurance against the following "criteria and processes for awarding self-accrediting authority to higher education institutions other than universities" (National Protocol C, July 2006):

- C1 demonstrates effectiveness and equivalence to existing Australian self-accrediting higher institutions in:
- governance and decision- making
 - teaching, learning, scholarship and, if relevant, research
 - compliance with the National Protocols
- C2 has effective and comprehensive structures and processes to set standards for AQF qualifications equivalent to Australian and, where relevant, international standards
- C3 has quality assurance processes and systems consistent with those in existing Australian institutions with self-accrediting authority
- C4 demonstrates commitment to quality assurance and continuous quality improvement in the provision of higher education, including arrangements for external benchmarking of teaching and learning and underpinning quality systems.

At the time of writing, guidelines to support the National Protocols were still under development, and hence details of specific requirements and evidence to verify compliance with Protocol C1 to C4 were yet to be approved by Ministers.

In the light of the above, before considering the audit's findings, it is important to know something of the organisational nature of the College. ACTh describes itself as 'a consortium' consisting of the ACTh secretariat ('main office'), and 'a network' of 22 affiliated teaching colleges (henceforth 'affiliated college(s)'). The consortium has affiliated colleges located in all

mainland states (seven in NSW; five in QLD; four in VIC; three in SA; two in WA), and one in New Zealand. (See Appendix A)

1.1 Institutional and Educational Objectives

There are two main quality assurance documents that relate to the College's institutional and educational objectives:

For institutional objectives, the College has a new Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision that was approved by the Board of Delegates (sections 1.2 and 3.1) in August 2006. In 2005 there was a consortium-wide conference which discussed broad issues relating to quality management and reviewed the College's Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision. The Audit Panel noted that there was another recently approved document that relates directly to institutional objectives and which drew heavily on this Statement: The ACTh Strategic Plan 2007–2009 (approved September 2006). This document appears to be the only 'plan' that deals with the future planning of the College's core business at a high-level.

The other document that relates to both the College's institutional and educational objectives is the Institutional and Course Approval Criteria for Approval to Teach the Awards of the ACTh (also approved September 2006). This document specifies the approval procedures for institutional quality assurance, and also provides criteria and guidelines for specific awards.

In addition, there are two other very important and also, in their current form, relatively new quality assurance documents relevant to the College's educational objectives: Learning Outcomes for ACTh Awards (enhanced in 2001 and subject to revision in February 2006); and Graduate Attributes (devised in 2001, and revised in April 2006). These documents set out the grade descriptors and learning outcomes for academic standards at all ACTh award levels, from undergraduate diplomas to postgraduate doctorates (section 2.1).

During the visits to the secretariat and the sample affiliated colleges the Audit Panel tested interviewees for their knowledge of how the related institutional and educational quality assurance processes work, and asked what each part of the organisation contributes to the ACTh consortium as a whole.

The Panel formed the view that the College's institutional and educational quality requirements are appreciated for providing appropriate academic standards across the consortium as a whole, while allowing sufficient flexibility for the affiliated colleges to implement courses in ways that are appropriate for their own particular missions. This is to avoid the need for "correction to any potentially overshadowing claims of confession, lest one expression of the Christian faith dictate educational outcomes to the detriment of other voices in the tradition and the pursuit of free enquiry" (PF p9). In summary, recognition of the ACTh brand by students studying at the affiliated colleges, alumni, and external stakeholders, is strong.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends the ACTh secretariat and the affiliated colleges for the positive relationships they have established, based on an understanding of, and mutual respect for the College's institutional and educational objectives, and what each body contributes to the ACTh consortium as a whole.

However, in noting that (in their current form) most of these institutional and educational quality policies and procedures are quite new, the Panel believes that close attention will need to be paid to planning and implementation by the secretariat, and some aspects will need to be strengthened, if self-accrediting institutional status is to be achieved. For example, the College may now need to revisit its stated institutional objectives to ensure they are appropriate for self-accrediting

status. (See section 1.2 for a related audit finding.) Planning and implementation issues are taken up throughout the Report.

1.2 *Institutional Governance*

The ACTh Portfolio has this to say on the situation that was confronting the College with respect to institutional governance:

“The most urgent governance issue facing the College is to vest governance unequivocally in the body now known as the Board of Delegates. This means that the present Board will need to become a Board of Directors. The Board and Council have resolved to do what is necessary to align the governance of the College with all 11 of the [Governance] Protocols. The self-review consultation with the teaching colleges also endorsed this intention.” (PF pp11-12)

The Portfolio then advised that in April 2006 the annual general meeting of the Council gave approval for the Board to prepare the groundwork needed for the drawing up of a revised canon to this effect that would be presented to the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church in October 2006.

When during the Audit Visit the Panel enquired into further progress on this important matter, it was advised as follows:

“On 21 October 2006 the General Synod Standing Committee resolved to endorse the work of the College towards the authorisation of a new canon and incorporated constitution of the College. The Committee accepted the argument that the existing arrangements of the College were not in keeping with the NSW DET Guidelines and the National Governance Protocols.” (SM62, 17 November 2006)

The Panel also received a copy of the Brief for Drafting a New ACT Canon, and a new Draft Constitution.

In following the history of this particular achievement, one that the Audit Panel believes is worthy of commendation, it noted the emphatic language that was used in a report from the secretariat to the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church to promote the case for change:

“Failure to act to address this situation will have catastrophic effects on the College and its approved colleges. If a new ACT Canon is not passed at the October 2007 meeting of the Synod....then the College will not be re-registered in 2009 by NSW DET. It will then be unable to provide various degrees and awards not only in NSW but all other states....In other words, *the College will cease to exist as a higher education provider.*” (SM44A, September 2006, emphasis in italics is ACTh’s)

Commendation 2

AUQA commends ACTh for adopting a proactive stance towards reforming the corporate governance arrangements that exist under its current constitution and the requirements of canon law of the Anglican Church.

AUQA notes that this development is consistent with the advice received from NSW DET that the College must be a recognised legal entity that can license the affiliated colleges in a ‘Principal and Agent’ relationship. Together with actions to restructure its system of academic boards and committees (section 3) this will put the College in a strong position to move towards obtaining

self-accrediting institutional status, and possibly even modified university title, if the consortium decides that this is appropriate.

However, the Audit Panel noted a quite critical observation made by the National Institute for Governance: "...in some areas the enabling legislation for the College (its canon and its constitution) fall short, such as a statement of *institutional* objectives in its constitution (i.e. one that expresses the overall purpose of the body – at present the ‘objects’ of the College are about its processes, not their desired ends).” (SM44 p3, the emphasis in italics is that by the National Institute of Governance.)

The Panel noted the work in progress to draft a new canon and constitution which is due to be submitted to the first meeting of the Canon Law Commission and the General Synod Standing Committee in 2007. During the Audit Visit the Dean advised the Panel that “The object of the College is unequivocally identified as the fostering and directing of the systematic study of theology ‘by teaching and research commensurate with the practice of the university system’.” (SM62, 17 November 2006)

The Panel believes that this work provides a window of opportunity to check that all the stated institutional objectives for ACTh are appropriate for an institution with self-accrediting responsibilities, as will be required under National Protocol C (additional criteria listed at section 1), which will come into effect in December 2007.

Recommendation 1

As the College plans to seek self-accrediting institutional status, AUQA recommends that ACTh review its statement of institutional objectives to ensure that they focus clearly on desired ends, including those that will be required for self-accrediting institutional status.

Other important quality assurance documents that also relate to institutional governance are: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Affecting the ACTh and Approved Colleges to Teach the Academic Awards of the College 2007–2010; and Teaching College Annual Reports, 2007 (section 4).

2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

The Australian College of Theology's Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision and the Strategic Plan 2007–2009 both include the following statements with respect to the effectiveness of teaching, learning and other core functions:

Mission

- *Exercise leadership in providing programs of demonstrable quality in Christian theological education;*
- *Assist teaching colleges to deliver those programs and to maintain and improve institutional quality; and*
- *Foster a culture of research and scholarship across the ACTh network.*

Objectives

- *Maintain, review, monitor and improve stated quality assurance procedures as stipulated in course submissions and the ACTh's quality management system;*
- *Support the network-wide brief of the Departmental Heads to foster collegiality and new research among the faculty of teaching colleges...; and*
- *Maintain and build on the resources required by colleges approved to deliver research degrees and monitor the quality of research supervision necessary to mentor the next generation of Christian scholars, and provide financial support for faculty study leave, participation in conferences and publishable research.*

2.1 *Teaching and Learning*

Based on direct observations at the affiliated colleges visited, the Audit Panel's overall finding with respect to the quality of learning and teaching provided through the ACTh is to commend the consortium for the quality of the educational experience being provided to students. This is achieved through an obvious commitment to a learner-centred approach, through critical engagement with texts, and a well-developed culture of teachers providing learners with helpful formative assessment.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends ACTh for the quality of the student experience provided through the affiliated colleges, including the colleges' commitment to the provision of a student-centred approach to learning and teaching and to the importance of feedback on student assessment.

There are also observations and findings that relate to specific aspects of the quality of learning and teaching in sections 3 and 4 of this Report.

With respect to quality assurance for learning and teaching, there are a number of ACTh policies and procedures that relate to teaching and learning quality (such as in admissions, progression requirements, etc), but for a *consortium-based* institution the key quality assurance component is the assessment moderation process, which is described as being the centrepiece of the College's quality management system.

“The ACTh's Quality Management System is designed to ensure that students' learning experiences and the grades awarded are uniform across the consortium. Letter grades awarded by

each college are measured against centrally devised grade descriptors and learning outcomes (section 1.1)...The moderation process insures parity of grades awarded and parity of esteem of teaching colleges. The process is based on centrally devised curricula and is enhanced by common regulations, entry requirements and degree structures.” (PF p20)

The Portfolio goes on to say that “until 2006 there had been no formal follow-up of deficiencies highlighted in moderator’s reports with a *concerted plan* (AUQA emphasis) of remedying such deficiencies by the colleges” and that “to address this shortcoming, the Board of Delegates established an academic audit committee which has been operating since the meeting of the Departmental Heads on 17 July 2006.” (PF p20) The Audit Panel explored the level of understanding of the actual assessment moderation process and was satisfied that it was now working reasonably effectively.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends ACTh for its assessment moderation process as the centrepiece of its academic quality management system, which has been made more robust through the establishment of an Academic Audit Committee.

However, in its interactions with academic staff, the Audit Panel found that knowledge about the role of the Academic Audit Committee was virtually non-existent (including among some quite senior staff). This observation led the Panel to reflect on the apparent lack of effective mechanisms for the promotion of a planned approach to learning and teaching development, across the consortium.

The Portfolio states that “[f]rom 2007, colleges will be asked to report in detail in the annual report what action was taken to improve teaching and learning” (PF p21); and there was an admission that “[w]hile assessment in the ACTh is quality assured through the moderation system...the secretariat has not been fully monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in colleges, such that evaluation leads to improvement.” (PF p21) However, there is no reference in the Portfolio to ‘closing the loop’ from these quality monitoring and reporting processes back into the institutional high-level planning process.

Within the context provided by the high-level Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision, and the Strategic Plan, a consolidated learning and teaching plan should establish future directions and priorities for the development of innovative teaching and learning, including professional development required, and based on the sharing of existing good practices in teaching and learning drawn from across the affiliated colleges.

Whether this is done by the ACTh developing a central ‘ACTh Learning and Teaching Plan’, or by requiring each affiliated college to develop its own specific learning and teaching plan within some agreed parameters articulated in the higher level planning documents, is something that should be discussed.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that the ACTh secretariat enter into immediate discussions with the affiliated colleges in order to develop a comprehensive consortium-wide learning and teaching plan.

There are also other audit findings that relate to other aspects of quality assurance and the improvement of learning and teaching in sections 3 and 4 of this Report.

2.2 *Scholarship and Creative Activity*

The ACTh self-review is quite direct about the need for the College to dramatically improve its performance in research and scholarship:

“Tracking of ACTh faculty publications over the last three years reveals a diminishing research output. This is a serious matter that strikes at the heart of the College’s claim to encourage research.” (PF p30)

In the ‘Improvement’ section of the Portfolio that followed, it was suggested that “[i]t would be helpful...to set a target of, say, an annual 5% increase in the research output of colleges...and the close monitoring of research output for approvals to deliver research degrees.” (PF p31) However, the Audit Panel was provided with little indication that this was likely to be achieved in the short term. The management of academic workloads across both teaching and scholarship was cited as a common problem, yet the potential for synergy between teaching and scholarship may well hold the key to finding a solution.

The Audit Panel observes that at present there appears to be a virtual high-level planning vacuum due to a lack of integration with the institution’s research and scholarship mission. This needs to be addressed if substantial improvement in research and scholarship performance is to be achieved.

For example, during the visits to the affiliated colleges the Panel noticed the opportunities within the consortium for ACTh to develop a distinctively applied and collaborative approach to theological scholarship, based on harvesting ideas for research and scholarship projects from the practical and community-engagement missions of the affiliated colleges in Ministry and Practice, including the unit fields of Evangelism/Missiology, Pastoral and Church-focussed Ministries and Developmental Ministries. All those who were questioned on this issue agreed with the Panel’s observation, yet none could suggest a comprehensive strategy to improve the College’s research and scholarship profile.

Given the ‘mission-critical’ need for ACTh to improve its research and scholarship performance for self-accrediting, and especially, modified university title status, the Audit Panel recommends adoption of a high-level task-force approach to improve research and scholarship planning and development.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that ACTh establish a task force to develop a comprehensive consortium-wide research and scholarship management plan, that will establish priorities and targets for the development of an enhanced ACTh research and scholarship profile.

The terms of reference for the taskforce, and the objectives of the research and scholarship management plan should include (but not confined to): identification of the most fertile areas for team-based, collaborative, action-oriented and performance-based research and scholarship activity; the adoption of a suitable working definition of ‘research active’ staff for this type of research and scholarship activity; and, the establishment of a ‘research shepherds’ or ‘grants shepherd’ scheme for the support and mentoring of ACTh staff and students involved in targeted research and scholarship development activity, including obtaining input from appropriate self-accrediting institutions.

3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING AND OTHER CORE ACTIVITIES

The Australian College of Theology's *Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision* and the *Strategic Plan 2007–2009* both include the following statements (or parts thereof) with respect to organisational structures, decision making processes and resources to support teaching and learning and other core activities:

Mission

- Support each teaching college in the task of equipping students for the practice of Christian ministry.

Objectives

- *Ensure that there are continued efficiencies built into the operation of the College in compliance with state and federal educational bodies, and that the ACTh secretariat, ACTh boards and committees are held accountable for this.*

Values

- *Supportive—the College exists to enhance the work of teaching colleges, providing through its academic boards, committees, conferences, and departments a context in which the more established colleges and the leading academics can provide mentoring and guidance to those less experienced.*

Vision

- *The College will provide support for sustained research by the faculty of teaching colleges approved to deliver the coursework and research degrees of the College, and will be known as a provider in which there is quality supervision and a high concentration of library and technical resources supporting critical engagement with scholarship; and*
- *The ACTh will add value to the operations of its teaching colleges through (a) efficiencies with respect to its provision of a web-based data base, (b) the managing of the processes leading to the accreditation of new and existing awards...and (d) the reporting of statistical data to DEST via the HEIMS regime.*

3.1 **Organisational Structures and Decision Making**

The Portfolio states: “Because the ACTh is a consortium it is vital that all decision-making processes facilitate the work of colleges. The self-review consultation and the survey of academic boards in mid 2005 commended the sense of partnership, cooperation and collegiality that is expressed in the ACTh’s board and committee structure.” (PF p33)

Despite this positive view, the College found through performing its self-review for AUQA, and recommendations from accreditations performed by the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) and the Queensland Office for Higher Education, that it was necessary to restructure the system of academic boards and committees, “to ensure that the ACTh’s board and committee structures work for efficient and prompt decision making.” (PF p34)

ACTh proposes to resolve the current three academic boards into two standing committees of the one Academic Board. The proposal to institute a new board and committee structure will be the major item for the 2007 consortium conference.

During the Audit Visit, the Panel sought clarification of the proposed changes to the institutional governance arrangements (outlined in section 1.2), and academic governance. Essentially this will involve some additional responsibilities for academic governance being transferred from the existing Board of Delegates to the new Academic Board, and the realignment of some responsibilities for academic quality assurance to the new Academic Board's new committees and subcommittees. The Panel affirms these decisions and notes that they are consistent with the proposed changes to institutional governance noted in section 1 of this Report.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms ACTh's decision to revise and strengthen the College's existing board and committee structure.

This finding links directly to Affirmation 3 in section 4.1.

3.2 Academic Staff

Academic staff members are appointed by the affiliated colleges within guidelines supplied by the ACTh. The College's Institutional and Course Approval Criteria specify the qualifications of faculty lecturing at each level of award. The self-review noted that there were certain existing deficiencies in the monitoring of compliance with these requirements, such as the unit moderators and the Dean currently being the only officers to monitor and follow-up such issues.

The Audit Panel notes that the Academic Audit Committee was instituted to address these deficiencies, but as mentioned above, the existence of this body was not known by many interviewees, let alone its role in academic quality assurance being understood. (See Recommendation 8 in section 4.2 for a relevant audit finding on this aspect.)

There are other audit findings in sections 2 and 4 of this Report which have implications for the involvement of academic staff in quality assurance and improvement processes, such as for example the role of the new Academic Board in approving and monitoring academic staff.

For example, the Audit Panel also noted that the College was aware that there was a need to increase opportunities for the professional development of academic staff, with grants for study leave and opportunities for sabbaticals being cited as being very important: "Professional development must become a regular and accepted aspect of college activity." (PF p40) The Panel suggests that this can only be achieved if it is embedded in the institutional planning processes (see also Recommendations 2, 3 and 7).

3.3 Support for Student Learning

In section 2.1, the consortium is commended for the quality of the student experience being provided, and this involves the support for student learning and learning resources. Much of this can be attributed to the attention given to pastoral care by the ACTh curriculum, and the coordinating roles of the Deans of Students in the affiliated colleges. The network of college libraries also plays an important part.

However, during the course of the audit, the Panel detected a view held among the affiliated colleges that the ACTh is 'educationally conservative', and 'not particularly innovative' when it comes to matters such as flexible learning and pedagogy. The Panel also noted the following statements in the Portfolio: "The ACTh has largely left good practice and innovation in teaching and learning to colleges"; (and in commenting on Course Experience Questionnaire [CEQ] data): "Some CEQs have alerted the secretariat to the disappointment felt by some that teaching in attendance mode was lacking in innovation through over-reliance on conventional "chalk and talk" pedagogy rather than multi-media." (PF p19)

The Panel noted from visits to sample affiliated colleges that Morling College (and also Malyon in first year only), the Bible College of Victoria, and latterly Ridley College, have established course provision by distance education mode, and that the ACTh secretariat is becoming increasingly aware of the need to support these sorts of initiatives: “In 2007 it would be worthwhile for the Board to fund seminars in each state encouraging the use of multimedia.” (PF p19)

The Panel also noted that Criteria for Directed Study Contract Mode and Intensive Mode had been approved in June 2006, and Criteria for Distance Education Mode had been developed and approved as recently as August 2006.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms the willingness of the College to support the provision of distance education as witnessed at Morling College; and as reported at Malyon College; the Bible College of Victoria; and Ridley College.

The Panel restates that the promotion of good practice and innovation in learning and teaching should be a distinguishing characteristic of the College’s learning and teaching plan.

3.4 Information Resources

The Portfolio advises that: “The ACTh secretariat underwrites and manages a central database to track enrolments, grades, progression, and graduation” (the Theological Academic Management System, TAMS) ... “TAMS is a web based system which enables college registrars to view student details and enter enrolments and results....The system also allows for more efficient DEST reporting. TAMS can also be used by individual colleges as their own database.” (PF p46)

The Panel heard a variety of views from personnel at the affiliated colleges about the functionality of TAMS from their college’s perspective, and noted the following statements in the Portfolio: “With respect to TAMS, further improvements to be rolled out during 2007 include a student portal, the ability to import results from other computer programs, and assessment modules for individual units for reporting results for each assessment rather than a final unit grade. TAMS is a work in progress.” (PF p47)

The Audit Panel acknowledges these as being positive developments, but believes that for ACTh to operate effectively as a self-accrediting institution the functionality of TAMS will need to be further enhanced to accommodate the changes that are envisaged as being necessary for the ACTh quality management system (QMS). The Recommendation immediately below therefore is closely related to the recommendations and affirmations that follow in section 4 of this Report.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that ACTh investigate the further development of the Theological Academic Management System so that it can be used as an effective information management system, for the collection and more systematic monitoring and reporting on quality processes and outcomes.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Australian College of Theology's Statement of Mission, Objectives, Values and Vision and the Strategic Plan 2007–2009 both include the following statements (or part thereof) with respect to maintaining a commitment to quality improvement:

Mission

- *Assist teaching colleges to deliver...programs and to maintain and improve institutional academic quality.*

Objectives

- *Maintain, review, monitor and improve stated quality assurance procedures as stipulated in course submissions and the ACTh's quality management system; and*
- *Monitor each college's attention to quality improvement, provision of resources (especially library and IT) that support scholarly and research endeavour, and continued compliance with ACTh institutional approval criteria, and monitor student and graduate satisfaction.*

Values

- *Quality assured—the College is committed to promoting academic policies, institutional approval criteria, systems and procedures that are in line with best tertiary practice and to ensuring that all teaching colleges enjoy a parity of esteem within the network in accordance with their level of award approval.*

Vision

- *The College's quality management system will be widely perceived as maintaining quality of the College's awards and inculcating a culture of commitment to improving quality within each of the teaching colleges regardless of their level of award approval; and*
- *The ACTh will add value to the operation of its teaching colleges through...(c) compliance with the audits conducted by AUQA and state agencies.*

This section of the Report makes some observations about the quality culture of the organisation as well as about improving its quality systems and processes.

4.1 Leadership

Overall, with respect to maintaining a commitment to continuous improvement, it was clear to the Audit Panel that the influence of the Dean and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is of fundamental importance.

This view was expressed unanimously at every one of the affiliated colleges visited, by members of ACTh Council and the Board of Delegates, including external members, and by other external stakeholders of the College and community representatives.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends the leadership of the Office of the Dean and CEO of ACTh in establishing and nurturing an organisational culture characterised by a strong commitment to quality assurance and improvement, while valuing flexibility and diversity of mission among the affiliated colleges.

4.2 *Review and Evaluation*

The audit findings that follow relate closely to a number of the College's quality assurance and improvement systems, processes (and related outcomes) that were described or mentioned earlier in this Report. This should indicate to the College Council, ACTh secretariat, and the principals, staff and students of the affiliated colleges, the actions that the AUQA Audit Panel believes are necessary for the College to achieve its mission, objectives and vision.

Firstly, as has already been noted, in a consortium-based organisation there is a dynamic tension between the centre (the ACTh secretariat) in providing the quality assurance policies and procedures for consistency of academic standards across the organisation (such as through the moderation of assessments), and the periphery (the affiliated colleges) in having sufficient independence to pursue their different theological traditions and separate missions (for example in terms of providing distance education for missionaries, or students in remote locations).

The Portfolio makes it clear that one of the key lessons learned by ACTh in its self-review is the need for the centre to now exercise stronger leadership in relation to quality assurance on behalf of the consortium, without damaging this delicate balance with the periphery. For example:

“Institutional monitoring occurs through the annual report which also includes the submission of audited financial statements. Less often, the college self-review (every five years) provides an evaluation of the extent to which each college is measuring up to ACTh institutional criteria.

Nevertheless, the QMS is heavily weighted in favour of assuring the quality of student assessments and does not take into account the assuring of other aspects of educational functioning, such as the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and delivery methods employed. The ACTh secretariat has minimal data on these matters and perceives a significant deficiency in its QMS. The self-review consultation recommended that the ACTh ensure that analysis of the data from student evaluations and CEQs becomes a constituent part of the QMS.” (PF pp49-50)

And, with respect to strengthening reporting:

“Evaluation of teaching and learning must extend beyond the moderation process to include processes that will evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and delivery methods. From 2007 the annual report will begin to provide this data.” (PF p50)

And, finally with respect to benchmarking:

“...there is a need for the ACTh to benchmark its requirements against its peers represented on the Committee of Deans and the theological educational sector in general.” (PF p52)

The two audit findings that follow are in accord with these self-review observations. The first affirms the general direction being taken by the College in quality assurance:

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms ACTh's decision to introduce a more robust and centralised approach to quality assurance including: involving the new single Academic Board in the approval of the appointment of academic staff to lecture at all levels; stronger monitoring and reporting of academic performance through the MOUs, five year reviews and annual reports; and development of arrangements for the benchmarking of academic performance across the consortium, and externally.

The Panel acknowledges that these developments must continue to be done in close consultation with the affiliated colleges.

The second is a related, but much more specific Recommendation about the collection of comparable data on learning and teaching performance across the consortium, and is based on discussions that the Audit Panel had with staff and students at the affiliated colleges.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh adopt a common student evaluation of teaching instrument with a core of common assessment items and a bank of elective questions that can be customised by the affiliated colleges to take into account different delivery modes and institutional contexts.

With respect to gathering information from external stakeholders, the Audit Panel noted the following statement in the Portfolio:

“During 2006, for the first time, the secretariat sought information about the suitability of ACTh courses from employers of ACTh graduates. Responses thus far have been positive. The use of GCCA questionnaires is also an innovation that will become a regular aspect of the ACTh’s monitoring of course quality.” (PF p53)

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh develop a common external stakeholder survey with a core of common items and a bank of elective items that can be customised by the affiliated colleges to take into account the different college missions, organisational cultures, and traditions.

This should make the formal gathering of information from external stakeholders ‘a regular aspect’ of the College’s QMS.

Finally, in relation to review and evaluation processes at the College level, as witnessed by the many examples of candid self-criticism of shortcomings of the College’s current QMS, the Panel commends ACTh for having so positively embraced the HESA requirement to undergo quality audit.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends ACTh for positively embracing the requirement to undergo quality audit under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* as an opportunity to undertake an authentic whole-of-institution self-review in order to assist the College achieve its objectives.

4.3 *Planning and Managing for Quality*

As outlined above, the main processes for the planning and management of quality are those belonging to the QMS such as: Institutional and Course Approval Criteria (MOUs); annual reports; five-yearly self-review; common regulations and boards; Course Advisory Committees; monitoring and evaluation of units of study; the work of the Academic Audit Committee (moderation); various policies; and surveys. These processes and structures have been commented on throughout this Report where relevant.

As already indicated, the Audit Panel was also very appreciative of the effort that had gone into the whole-of-institution self-review and noted the large number of improvement activities that

had been identified. In addition, there are the recommendations and affirmations contained in this Report. However, the Panel is concerned that these initiatives will be dissipated, and the momentum for the orderly management of change could be lost, due to the lack of sufficient high-level, consortium-wide planning mechanisms. The Panel has already noted the need for learning and teaching and research and scholarship plans.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that in consultation with the affiliated colleges, ACTh develop a consortium-wide quality assurance implementation plan to address the many improvement actions identified by the College in its self-review, and including the findings of this Audit Report.

This plan should specify a schedule and allocation of responsibilities for the roll-out of all the required changes to be made to the QMS, hence the focus in the plan's title on 'implementation'. This plan will assist the College in its progress reporting to AUQA; reporting to the state and territory accrediting agencies; and also help it to achieve self-accrediting institutional status in a planned manner. The Audit Panel observes that the soon-to-be appointed Quality Officer would make an ideal custodian for the development and ongoing monitoring of the quality assurance implementation plan.

There will also be a need for the ACTh secretariat to more effectively communicate the many changes that have now commenced, and will now be occurring, to the affiliated colleges and the College's external stakeholders: such as the establishment of the Academic Audit Committee, and the establishment of the single Academic Board and the restructuring of the existing boards and committees; or those changes to be introduced through the adoption of plans for the development of learning and teaching, research and scholarship, and the systematic management of quality.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that ACTh develop a comprehensive change-management communication strategy to ensure that planned changes to be introduced are fully known and understood across the consortium.

Finally, from a risk management perspective, as noted above, even with the support of a dedicated Quality Officer, the role of the Dean and CEO is absolutely critical in this challenging period of the College's evolution, which is described in these terms at the very end of the Portfolio:

"The self-review and the AUQA audit, coinciding as they do with the NSW re-accreditation process and the revision of the National Protocols, come at a time when the ACTh is facing an exciting future. All stakeholders are aware that the College will only benefit from possible self-accreditation and modified university title if it continues to act as a coherent network and enhances those processes that make for continued quality improvement." (PF p58)

The Audit Panel learned that this issue had been the subject of some timely discussion, and urges the College to move forward with a plan that will ensure continuity and maintenance of momentum.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms the need for ACTh to develop a risk-managed, succession plan for the current Dean and CEO, to ensure that the momentum for quality assurance and improvement that has been gathered is sustained throughout the College in the longer term.

APPENDIX A: THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY

History and Location

The Australian College of Theology (ACTh) is a non self-accrediting specialist provider of coursework and research degrees in theology. It was established in 1891 by a Determination of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia to foster the “systematic study of divinity”. From its beginning the College operated as an examining body offering a centrally devised curriculum governed by a body of regulations agreed by a governing Board.

The College now operates as a national consortium of affiliated Bible and theological colleges. The consortium was effectively initiated in the 1970s. There are now 20 mostly non-Anglican colleges that have been approved to deliver the awards of the College on its behalf. These colleges currently enrol just over 1300 equivalent full-time students and research candidates. As at the end of 2006 there have been just over 13,000 graduates of the College. Through its academic boards and committees the College continues to determine the curriculum, regulatory system and quality assurance processes that are applied across the consortium.

The relationship between each affiliated college and the Board of Delegates, the body chiefly responsible for the academic governance of the College, is articulated in and regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding. It is recognised that each affiliated college is an independent entity in its own right. There is a high value placed on collaboration and cooperation across the network.

The College was approved by DEST as a higher education provider in October 2004 under the terms of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. The College’s office is located in Druiitt Street, Sydney.

Academic Profile

The College’s original awards were four in number. All were conferred by successful examination only. One of these awards corresponded to a research doctorate, and was superseded by the degree of Doctor of Theology in the 1960s. The ACTh’s current suite of accredited higher education awards has grown from the Bachelor of Theology degree, first approved by the NSW Higher Education Board in 1975, and the research degree of Master of Theology in 1976. An Master of Arts (Theology) degree was added in 1988. 1992 saw the accreditation of the Bachelor of Ministry—the first of several coursework awards in theology with a ministry major. The Doctor of Ministry, a doctorate modelled on Australian university professional doctorates and the North American Doctor of Ministry degree, was first accredited in 1998.

Key Statistics 2005

Total Student Enrolments:		2557
Research Student Enrolments:		85
International Student Enrolments:		143
Total Student Teaching Load:		1311
Total Staff FTE (not including casual staff):	Academic:	125
	General:	93
	Total:	218
Total Operating Revenues (2005):		\$772,123
Total Operating Expenses (2005):		\$554,654

APPENDIX B: AUQA'S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VALUES AND VISION

Mission

By means of quality audits of universities and accrediting agencies, and otherwise, AUQA will provide public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and will assist in improving the academic quality of these institutions.

Objectives

1. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of quality assurance arrangements relating to the activities of Australian universities, other self-accrediting institutions and state and territory higher education accreditation bodies.
2. Monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on quality assurance arrangements in self-accrediting institutions, and on processes and procedures of state and territory accreditation authorities, and on the impact of those processes on quality of programs.
3. Report on the criteria for the accreditation of new universities and non-university higher education courses as a result of information obtained during the audit of institutions and state and territory accreditation processes.
4. Report on the relative standards of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes, including their international standing, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.

Values

AUQA will be:

- *Thorough*: AUQA carries out all its audits as thoroughly as possible.
- *Supportive*: recognising institutional autonomy in setting objectives and implementing processes to achieve them, AUQA acts to facilitate and support this.
- *Flexible*: AUQA operates flexibly, in order to acknowledge and reinforce institutional diversity.
- *Cooperative*: recognising that the achievement of quality in any organisation depends on a commitment to quality within the organisation itself, AUQA operates as unobtrusively as is consistent with effectiveness and rigour.
- *Collaborative*: as a quality assurance agency, AUQA works collaboratively with the accrediting agencies (in addition to its audit role with respect to these agencies).
- *Transparent*: AUQA's audit procedures, and its own quality assurance system are open to public scrutiny.
- *Economical*: AUQA operates cost-effectively and keeps as low as possible the demands it places on institutions and agencies.
- *Open*: AUQA reports publicly and clearly on its findings in relation to institutions, agencies and the sector.

Vision

- AUQA's judgements will be widely recognised as objective, fair, accurate, perceptive, rigorous and useful: AUQA has established detailed and effective procedures for audit, that include auditor appointment and training, extensive and thorough investigation, and consistent implementation.
- AUQA will work in partnership with institutions and accrediting agencies to add value to their activities: AUQA audit is based on self-review, acknowledges the characteristics of the institution or agency being audited, and accepts comment from the auditee on the best way of expressing the audit findings.
- AUQA's advice will be sought on matters related to quality assurance in higher education: AUQA will carry out consulting activities, including workshops, publications, and advising, and will publish and maintain a database of good practice.
- AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency: AUQA will build international links to learn from and provide leadership to other agencies, and will work with other agencies to the benefit of Australian institutions.

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Mr Robert Carmichael, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Victoria

Emeritus Professor Ruth Grant, Consultant, formerly Pro Vice Chancellor (Health Sciences) & Vice President, Health Sciences, University of South Australia

Professor Gareth Jones CNZM, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and International, University of Otago, New Zealand (Chair)

Ms Susanne Knowles, Director, Corporate Renewal P/L, Queensland

DEST Observer:

Dr John Grant, Visiting Fellow, UNESCO Centre, Australian National University

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following abbreviations and definitions are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

ACT.....	Australian Capital Territory / Australian College of Theology
ACTh.....	Australian College of Theology
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CEO.....	Chief Executive Officer
CEQ.....	Course Experience Questionnaire
DEST.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training
FTE.....	full-time equivalent
EFTSL	equivalent full-time student load
GCCA.....	Graduate Careers Council of Australasia
HEP(s).....	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
MCEETYA.....	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MOU(s)	Memorandum of Understanding (Memoranda)
National Governance Protocols.....	<i>National Governance Protocols for Higher Education Providers</i> are set out in Chapter 7 of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines (http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/guidelines/cgs_guide.htm)
National Protocols.....	<i>National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>
NSAI(s).....	non self-accrediting institution(s)
NSW	New South Wales
NSW DET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
PF p	Portfolio page reference
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio: Report of Self-Review
QAFs	Quality Audit Factors
QLD.....	Queensland
QMS	Quality Management System
SA.....	South Australia
SAI	self-accrediting institution
SM.....	Supplementary Material
TAMS.....	Theological Academic Management System
VIC.....	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

