

# AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of  
Australian Catholic University

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 *Audit Findings*

The scope for the 2008 audit of the Australian Catholic University (ACU National) is the two themes of 'Learning Outcomes' and 'Community Engagement', together with follow-up of selected recommendations from the AUQA Cycle 1 audit. In addition the Report includes comments on the University's compliance with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*, other external reference points and on academic standards.

AUQA's findings in relation to follow up to the Cycle 1 recommendations and the two themes are contained in sections 2 to 4. Data that support the findings are provided in section 5. Information on the conduct of the audit is at Appendix A.

#### 1.1.1 Main Points

ACU National is making an important contribution to the education of teaching and nursing professionals, and professionals in a range of other fields. In terms of the wider sector, ACU National recognises, however, that it must continue to further define its particular place within Australian higher education. It will be important for the University to pursue its intention of more closely defining and consistently implementing its approach to the maintenance of academic standards.

The Audit Panel noted the inclusive and participative manner in which the institution prepared for the audit. The Panel heard from a number of interviewees about the opportunity that this quality audit provided through raising awareness and promoting institution-wide discussions on key institutional activities.

ACU National has had varying success in addressing the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommendations with further action required to ensure a satisfactory response in some cases.

A key aspect of the University's approach to learning and teaching is known as the '*Learning Paradigm*'. At its core, this is a student-centred approach to learning which aims to promote holistic learning. It was the subject of a recommendation in 2003. The Panel found that while the *Learning Paradigm* has increasingly been embraced by academics and students, as acknowledged by the University, more work needs to be done to fully implement it.

A feature of the Australian Catholic University is the evident commitment, loyalty and dedication of its staff. There is high awareness and shared understanding of the mission which gives the inspiration and impetus to the provision of quality learning experiences, including pastoral care for students and a responsive and positive interaction with the wide range of ACU National community partners. There are a number of laudable community engagement activities in which staff and students participate. Strong Indigenous student outcomes and the mechanisms by which these have been achieved are positively noted.

The University makes use of external reference points to monitor its progress, including measures derived from Graduate Careers Australia student surveys. Whilst acknowledging the value of these standard measures, it is desirable that the University identify additional outcome

measures that more specifically address the areas of learning outcomes and community engagement, and that a more comprehensive approach to benchmarking is undertaken.

On comparative outcome indicators for Australian universities, ACU National stands out for its performance in both access and participation rates, and success and retention of Indigenous students. ACU National rates higher than the sector mean for graduate full-time work, as measured by the Graduate Destination Survey. In the Course Experience Questionnaire, ACU National graduates rate the University below the sector mean for generic skill development.

#### 1.1.2 Quality Enhancement

The Panel noted that the University has recently established a range of new structural arrangements to enhance planning and quality management appropriate for its multi-campus structure and distinctive character as a Catholic public university. The Panel considers that the University's commitment to a revision of the institutional strategic plan is timely and keenly anticipated within the institution.

ACU National's documentation shows that the University follows the PIRI (Plan, Implement, Review and Improve) approach. Whilst there is evidence of the use of a quality cycle, ACU National needs to ensure that there is development of a more comprehensive and more broadly understood quality system which would include, for example, a planned and regular schedule of organisational unit reviews, a revised set of regularly reported key performance indicators, more effective approaches to document control and a more comprehensive system of benchmarking.

#### 1.1.3 Matters from Cycle 1 Audit

The Audit Panel reviewed the recommendations from the 2003 Audit Report and investigated a selection of these. Since the last audit ACU National has had varying levels of success in addressing the range of recommendations. In particular, the University needs to give urgent attention to addressing key workforce planning issues including the renewal of workforce, addressing the age profile and finding the optimal balance of permanent and sessional staff.

The Panel noted that a number of recommendations (eg 2, 3, 6, 9–13, and 15–19) from the Cycle 1 were linked to the theme of learning outcomes and the ways in which the learning outcomes are consistently achieved across the University's multiple teaching locations and modes. These were followed up within the theme.

#### 1.1.4 Theme 1: Learning Outcomes

Important work is being done to support teaching and learning, including activities of the associate deans (teaching, learning and international), the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (IATL), the Academic Skills Unit, and other academic support specialists including the online advisors. There are challenges presented by increasing student numbers, high workloads, succession planning and maintaining the balance between continuing and sessional teaching staff. The University will need to carefully monitor the demands made on student support mechanisms with the aim of maintaining appropriate levels of support.

ACU National has in place a robust course review and approval process and quality assurance mechanisms to support aspects of online delivery. Also notable is the range of support and strategies in place to accommodate diverse student needs, including functions of the Library, Academic Skills Unit, counselling services, the Mission Engagement Team and Indigenous

Education Units. The strong pastoral care for students is evident throughout ACU National programs.

ACU National has defined learning outcomes and integrated them into all its courses. In this integrative process, attention has been paid to the relationship between individual course or unit learning outcomes, ACU National's graduate attributes, and assessment. However, the extent to which there are shared institutional understandings of how these are linked and known to both staff and students is an issue. ACU National must revisit its Assessment Policy and Procedures to ensure that these linkages are clear and that grading criteria and processes are applied in a manner consistent with the attainment of learning outcomes as intended.

ACU National's academic leadership and the IATL are the driving force behind and strongly supportive of the *Learning Paradigm* and recognise that there is further need to provide ongoing professional development and support to teaching staff. ACU National is also urged to fulfil its intention to more fully implement the *Learning Paradigm* (a key aspect of the University's approach to teaching and learning) and to further improve the approach for collecting and using student evaluation data, two areas that were the subject of recommendations from the Cycle 1 audit.

The Panel suggests that ACU National uses benchmarking of its standards with similar institutions and programs to identify and validate appropriate academic standards for the University.

#### 1.1.5 Theme 2: Community Engagement

The University has reached an important stage in the development of community engagement with a number of successful projects across all campuses. There is widespread understanding by staff of the shift from a service to an engaged paradigm, an increased awareness of activities across the University and a sharing of opportunities which are gradually being replicated on all campuses. There is a long tradition of experiential learning and service, and the idea of mutual benefit sits well with the mission of ACU National.

An intended change in leadership arrangements will enable the University to move to a new level of maturity in its community interactions. The work of the Community Engagement Advisory Committee is important, providing a forum for discourse and reflection about engagement. The creation of the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement as a facilitating unit which provides strategic support is recognised by staff as adding value to the embedding of community engagement in teaching and learning, and research.

To achieve greatest benefit, there is a need for more work in promulgating the Community Engagement Framework model across the faculties and schools. A new Framework for defining and characterising community engagement currently under consideration by the Core Planning Group seems to be a valuable organising strategy. It will assist the University to understand how activities fit the overarching objectives while at the same time preserving the essential nature of the local context and thrusts of campuses. It will be essential that the University's new strategic plan sets out the key performance indicators for community engagement and that these are reflected in support plans and enacted at the faculty and school level.

There are some excellent examples of research based on community engagement projects. However, there is a need for more work, at policy level, on building engaged research into strategic research planning at University level. Some of the benefits of community engagement (embedded in teaching and learning, and research) are intangible. Nevertheless, careful

measures need to be developed to assess the outcomes effectively. This will enable the University to report more fully on its successes.

## **1.2 National Protocols and Other External Reference Points**

This audit did not identify any matters of concern regarding ACU National's compliance with relevant external reference points.

### **1.2.1 National Protocols**

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes require all universities to meet a range of criteria, in particular, nationally agreed criteria for all higher education institutions (A1 to A10) and criteria for universities (D1 to D5). The Protocols were adopted only relatively recently, in 2007. Therefore at the beginning of Cycle 2 audits, in 2008, institutions are only beginning to make specific checks of the extent of their compliance with the Protocols. On the evidence considered by the Panel, AUQA believes that ACU National satisfies the criteria of the National Protocols.

### **1.2.2 Other External Reference Points**

The University has considered the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council statement of priorities and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* while developing its policies and procedures. The University has been found to comply with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act), and the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students* (the National Code). With reference to these external reference points, AUQA has not identified any issues that might affect the quality of ACU National's international activities.

ACU has also used a number of other reference points derived from the following:

- Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
- Benchmarking surveys conducted by the Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology.
- Benchmarking initiatives of the Australian Universities International Directors' Forum HR Benchmarking Program established by Queensland University of Technology
- Course Experience Questionnaire
- Council of Australian University Librarians
- Graduate Destination Survey
- Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio
- Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire
- Rodski surveys.

The University has used these reference points for making improvements in various aspects of its functions. In addition, the University needs to identify additional external reference points that relate directly to its distinguishing initiatives such as learning outcomes and community engagement and generally to undertake a more comprehensive approach to benchmarking.

## **1.3 Strategic Context**

Australian Catholic University (ACU National) was established on 1 January 1991 following the amalgamation of four Catholic higher education institutions in eastern Australia - the Catholic College of Education Sydney in New South Wales, the Institute of Catholic Education in Victoria,

McAuley College of Queensland, and Signadou College of Education in the Australian Capital Territory.

The University is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, under the Companies (Victoria) Code and has a constitution which makes specific its purposes in education, scholarship and research as part of the mission of the Catholic Church.

ACU National is a publicly funded university. It has six campuses in four states/territories on the eastern seaboard of Australia, with two campuses in Victoria (Melbourne – St Patrick's and Ballarat – Aquinas), one in the ACT (Canberra – Signadou), two in Sydney (North Sydney – MacKillop and Strathfield – Mount St Mary) and one in Queensland (Brisbane – McAuley at Banyo). In 2007, the largest campus by student numbers was Melbourne, followed by Strathfield and North Sydney campuses (Data Items 5.1 and 5.2). The University also has a virtual campus with about 1000 students. There are three faculties and a total of 21 schools.

The University offered in 2007 approximately 50 undergraduate courses and 70 postgraduate courses. No single course is taught across all campuses but a number of courses in all three faculties are offered at several campuses. The total effective full-time student load (EFTSL) in 2006 was 10,874 where international students constituted 21% of the student load. In the same period, the University had 677.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) academic staff and 536.7 FTE general staff.

The mission signals that ACU National's distinctiveness as a higher education institution is in its Catholic ethos and contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition. ACU National's approach is 'based on a foundation of respect for cultures, religions, traditions and history', with a 'spiritual dimension'. It aspires to explicitly engage with 'the social, ethical and religious dimensions of the questions it faces in teaching and research, and service.' It focuses on 'placing values at the heart of its academic pursuits.'

The current Strategic Plan is supported by two core business plans (Teaching and Learning Plan, and Research Plan), Strategic Support Plans (6 in all) and a number of Strategic Implementation Plans (including Faculty Plans).

The Strategic Plan 1999–2008 identified the following priorities:

- Enhancing the Mission-focus of all the University's activities.
- Implementing different mechanisms for University funding that relate meaningfully to and derive benefit from the Crossroads policy initiatives that have just been formulated.
- Conducting ongoing structural reform.
- Targeting internationalisation and international education more effectively.
- Placing an increased emphasis on flexible learning.
- Working to enhance and integrate the culture of research within the University.
- Increasing the range and depth of community engagements and collaborative partnerships.
- Enhancing ACUcom activity.
- Embedding quality more obviously across all the University's endeavours and working to communicate efficiently a sense of that to all staff and to all units.
- Developing a 'culture of evidence' across the University in support of its decision-making.

Many of the University activities and the ongoing changes have been driven by these strategic goals, although it is acknowledged that the University is about to undertake a significant revision of its Strategic Plan.

**1.4 Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations**

This Report contains 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 ACU National, with evidence, they are termed ‘affirmations’. High priority recommendations are marked ‘urgent’. It is acknowledged that recommendations in this Audit Report may have resource implications.

The themes for Cycle 2 audits are chosen for their risk potential and are likely also to reflect the institution’s own assessment of its developmental and strategic needs. For this reason, Cycle 2 audit reports may contain more recommendations and affirmations than commendations. As for Cycle 1 audits, AUQA aims to assist the University to enhance the quality and standards of its operations.

**Commendations**

1. AUQA commends ACU National for the establishment of new structural arrangements, including a strengthened Core Planning Group, the Office of Planning and Strategic Management and the Properties Office which will enhance planning, quality and management. ....	10
2. AUQA commends ACU National for the rigorous course approval process which has an explicit focus on graduate attributes. ....	17
3. AUQA commends ACU National for the significant contribution to student learning outcomes made by the Library. ....	20
4. AUQA commends ACU National for the support network for academic staff and students provided by the Counselling Services, the Mission Engagement Team, the Academic Skills Unit and other academic support specialists. ....	21
5. AUQA commends ACU National for the support provided to Indigenous students, including the provision of ‘away from base’ support which has resulted in positive access, participation, success and retention rates. ....	22
6. AUQA commends ACU National for achieving a shared understanding among staff, students and partners of the University’s intention to shift from a community service to a community engagement paradigm. ....	27
7. AUQA commends ACU National for the high level commitment to, and support for, community engagement as evidenced by the establishment of the Institute for Advancement of Community Engagement, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee and the strong leadership provided for the development and promotion of community engagement across the University. ....	29
8. AUQA commends ACU National for the wide range of effective community engagement partnerships in operation across the disciplines and campuses of the University. ....	31

## **Affirmations**

1. AUQA affirms the commitment of ACU National to develop a new institution-wide strategic plan. ....9
2. AUQA affirms the direction signalled by ACU National’s interim Workload Policy and urges that further development and implementation of the Policy ensure the opportunity for staff input in order to gain commitment to the new model. ....11
3. [urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National’s recognition of the need to achieve a greater depth of understanding by staff and students about the *Learning Paradigm* and to ensure that the Paradigm is systematically embedded across the University. ....14
4. [urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National’s recognition of the need to improve its overall approach to the collection and use of student evaluation data for monitoring and quality improvement purposes. ....16
5. AUQA affirms ACU National’s intention to embed moderation across the University and to further formalise the current approaches to intra-institutional and cross-institutional moderation to ensure academic standards. ....19
6. [urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National’s intention to implement a teaching timetable which meets the requirements of each campus and the University. ....20
7. AUQA affirms ACU National’s recognition of the need to make explicit shared academic standards and to ensure their consistent implementation across all campuses. ....24
8. AUQA affirms ACU National’s development of a draft framework for community engagement and encourages the University to use it to embed community engagement in teaching and learning, and research. ....28
9. AUQA affirms ACU National’s recognition of the need to use memoranda of understanding with partners to provide a consistent approach to community engagement activities. ....32

## **Recommendations**

1. [urgent] AUQA recommends that, while noting ACU National’s current and planned activities to address workforce planning issues, mechanisms be strengthened to resolve workforce issues proactively.....11
2. AUQA recommends that ACU National establish regular staff satisfaction surveys with the provision of feedback to staff on resulting action taken. ....12
3. AUQA recommends that ACU National further develops its quality management system in order to ensure that the University’s approach to quality assurance is more consistently understood.....12
4. AUQA recommends that ACU National review its assessment policy, procedures and grading criteria to clarify linkages between assessment, unit learning outcomes and graduate attributes. ....18
5. AUQA recommends that ACU National establish accountability for systematic quality assurance, monitoring and risk management of web-enhanced units. ....23

- 6. AUQA recommends that ACU National ensure that a risk management approach is taken when establishing community engagement partnerships.....32
- 7. AUQA recommends that ACU National ensure that effective community engagement key performance indicators are derived from the proposed Community Engagement Framework, aligned with the new Strategic Plan and reflected in support plans.....33

## 2 MATTERS FROM AUDIT CYCLE 1

At the time of the submission of the Performance Portfolio, Australian Catholic University provided a final Progress Report on the recommendations of the 2002 AUQA Audit Report. The Panel noted that since the last audit ACU National has had variable success in addressing the range of recommendations. While a number of the recommendations have been dealt with satisfactorily, the actions on some recommendations did not adequately resolve the issues highlighted for attention. The Panel followed up on recommendations related to: the integration of planning, quality assurance, and risk management; the use of key performance indicators; benchmarking; workforce planning; and the internal quality assurance systems as well as recommendations relating to the theme of Learning Outcomes.

### 2.1 *Recommendations on the Integration of Planning, Quality Assurance, Key Performance Indicators, Benchmarking and Risk Management*

The 2002 AUQA Audit Report recommended a greater alignment and integration between the mission, Strategic Plan and the institutional operational plans. In addition, other recommendations called for a greater integration of the quality assurance system, the development and use of performance indicators and the management of risk.

The University has addressed many of these concerns by updating its plans and by identifying a core set of indicators. A hierarchy of plans was put in place, where individual performance plans articulate with the higher level plans of faculties and administrative units which, in turn, were aligned to the University Strategic Plan. One cycle of reporting against the indicators was initiated and a 'Culture of Evidence' report was completed. A subsequent decision was made to use a different approach which allowed for regular reporting, rather than waiting for the next comprehensive institutional report to be produced.

The Panel heard that this planning system has worked unevenly across ACU National. The large number of strategic priorities and their lack of specificity added to the complexity of comprehensively implementing the Strategic Plan. Reporting against all of the 24 indicators was not achieved, due to the absence of comprehensive data for a number of the indicators (eg, in research) and in some instances the lack of specificity of the indicator. While the current Strategic Plan and approach to institutional planning have taken the University forward, as ACU National considers the next stage of its growth and development, it is timely to find new planning approaches which consolidate the achievements of the present Plan and will advance ACU National to the next stage of its development. This includes the development of a new strategic plan due for completion in 2009 with a manageable number of clearly articulated indicators.

The University's commitment to a comprehensive revision of the institutional strategic plan is timely and keenly anticipated within the institution. It will be important that there is a communication strategy in place to ensure broad participation by all stakeholders at ACU National and both understanding and ownership of the new plan.

#### **Affirmation 1**

**AUQA affirms the commitment of ACU National to develop a new institution-wide strategic plan.**

The Panel heard about a number of positive benchmarking activities which had taken place across the University and which have had a positive impact on operations, particularly in the services areas. A number of organisational units have conducted benchmarking activities with other institutions, for example student satisfaction with library services, IT expenditure and resources, international operations, human resources, and reward and recognition of quality teaching in higher education. Funding derived from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund was provided to faculties for benchmarking against comparable faculties in other institutions.

While there have been significant improvements since the last AUQA audit in the area of benchmarking, it is an activity identified for further attention by ACU National. A Statement on Benchmarking was formally approved in 2007. In the academic area benchmarking is the responsibility of the faculties and while there is some external benchmarking, it is mostly between schools across campuses. The Panel heard that an integrated approach at ACU National is still developing. Benchmarking, particularly academic benchmarking, needs to be more strongly driven from the national level. In order to enhance the University's quality assurance processes a University-wide approach to benchmarking, which supports review of core University activities and addresses the issue of academic standards, should be considered.

The Panel noted evidence of integration of risk management into the strategic planning process, budgeting and resource allocation. A number of support units appear to use the risk management framework very well. What was less clear to the Panel was whether sufficient use is made of a risk management approach in academic operations and community engagement (section 4.3).

There is a need for further work in this area to achieve a greater integration of risk management into planning. While there is monitoring of the management of faculty level risk through the Office of the Director of Finance, the University needs to ensure that actions to mitigate academic risk are implemented as key activities in University strategic and operational planning. This matter will be addressed further below.

The University has recently announced a range of new structural arrangements to enhance and comprehensively manage planning and quality. This involves dedicated senior leaders at the national level who will link strategic leadership, quality and planning. This leadership is to be supported by a new Office of Planning and Strategic Management. A Property Office has been established to manage the physical multi-campus arrangements and assist in the development and growth of the various campuses.

#### **Commendation 1**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the establishment of new structural arrangements, including a strengthened Core Planning Group, the Office of Planning and Strategic Management and the Properties Office which will enhance planning, quality and management.**

The multi-campus nature of the University poses challenges in the balance of local autonomy and diversity of campuses with the establishment of Australian Catholic University as a national university. The recent review of senior manager portfolios and responsibilities appears to be a positive step in addressing such issues.

## **2.2 Recommendation on Workforce Planning**

The 2002 Audit Report identified workforce planning as a major risk to ACU National, with attention needed to matters such as the appropriate balance between permanent and sessional staff, replacing an ageing staff and succession planning.

At the time of the audit in 2002, ACU National was implementing a Human Resources Management Information System which was intended to provide high level human resources (HR) management data for use in planning and decision-making. The University responded to the recommendation by developing and implementing a workforce planning framework and participated in an HR benchmarking program. However, these actions have proved insufficient to address the pressing workforce problems, and the situation has not improved since the first audit. Whilst there are HR policies in place, it is becoming increasingly important for ACU National to manage workforce planning in an integrated and purposeful way.

In recent years the ACU National academic staff mean age has been increasing at a rate significantly above the higher education sector mean. For example, in 2006 the ACU National 55-64 age cohort comprised 39.2% of academic staff, against the sector mean of 21.5% (Data Item 5.4). The Portfolio notes that the casualisation of the academic workforce has been growing and that, increasingly, roles formerly played by continuing staff are being played by sessional staff. These were issues the Panel found to be of concern to staff.

The Performance Portfolio states that addressing workforce issues is a high priority for the University. The Panel was informed of a recent University initiative on staff renewal which has started in the Faculty of Education. Staff renewal will proceed in the two other faculties in 2009. The Panel is of the opinion that, given the importance of academic staffing for the whole University, the planned renewal projects should be treated as a matter of urgency. As part of this process, attention must also be given to the numbers and roles of sessional staff within workforce planning.

### **Recommendation 1**

**[urgent] AUQA recommends that, while noting ACU National's current and planned activities to address workforce planning issues, mechanisms be strengthened to resolve workforce issues proactively.**

The Panel was provided with information regarding an interim Workload Policy (dated 30 July 2008) intended to recognise the balance needed between quality teaching and learning and research and scholarship within which community engagement is embedded together with administration and professional responsibilities. Academic staff welcomed the policy as they consider that workloads are an area of concern for staff. A number of academic staff indicated that a process of consultation and communication is required to gain academics' support for the new policy. The Interim Workload Policy has the potential to strengthen the current staff management system, which explicitly links the individual's performance to University plans.

### **Affirmation 2**

**AUQA affirms the direction signalled by ACU National's interim Workload Policy and urges that further development and implementation of the Policy ensure the opportunity for staff input in order to gain commitment to the new model.**

A need for the development of routine 'bottom up' channels of communication was identified as essential in the Cycle 1 audit. While it is understood that there is a plan to conduct a staff climate survey, the Panel believes it is important that the University regularly elicit staff opinion on a range of issues, formally measure staff satisfaction and provide feedback to staff on resulting actions.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National establish regular staff satisfaction surveys with the provision of feedback to staff on resulting action taken.**

### **2.3 Improvements to Internal Quality Assurance**

ACU National's chosen approach to quality assurance uses the PIRI (Plan, Implement, Review and Improve) cycle which promotes a philosophy of continuous improvement. There are a number of policies and processes which support quality assurance at ACU, notably the Quality Management Policy. There are faculty plans in place and a regular system of course reviews. The Quality Management Committee has responsibility for the Quality Management Policy, and has oversight of the University quality management system. It makes quality-related recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor, including the 'development and use of performance indicators for strategic planning, quality and review purposes' (SM06).

While there is evidence of application of the PIRI cycle there is a need for the development and operation of a more comprehensive quality system including, *inter alia*, a planned and regular schedule of organisational unit reviews, more effective approaches to document control, a revised set of regularly reported key performance indicators, and a more systematic and comprehensive system of benchmarking.

The University's current approach to quality assurance appeared not to be widely or consistently understood and in developing an enhanced quality system the University needs to develop a communication strategy that ensures broad comprehension.

#### **Recommendation 3**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National further develops its quality management system in order to ensure that the University's approach to quality assurance is more consistently understood.**

The Office of Planning and Strategic Management will be significant in supporting the enhancement of quality, and in the context of the structural changes underway at ACU National the Panel suggests that the composition and terms of reference of the Quality Management Committee be reviewed.

### 3 THEME: LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### 3.1 *Selection of Theme*

In 2007, ACU National proposed the theme 'Learning Outcomes' for this audit. Because of the importance of learning outcomes in realising its mission, the University requested that AUQA evaluate its approaches to learning outcomes to assist it in improving these approaches. Central to the University's approach to learning outcomes is enabling students to 'qualify for life' as they will have a professional and personal impact on the lives of those around them. Attention to graduate attributes exerts a significant guiding influence in course development, implementation and review. In the context of the overall approach to teaching and learning at ACU National, known as the '*Learning Paradigm*', it is expected that in each course the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment will identify the graduate attributes within the scope of learning outcomes.

AUQA's risk analysis of ACU National, which included consideration of the Strategic Plan, future direction of the University and indicator data, identified this to be an appropriate theme.

The agreed scope of this theme is:

- leadership and management of teaching and learning
- teaching and strategies
- staff development in teaching and learning
- student evaluation of teaching and learning
- course development, implementation and review
- assessment framework and practice
- learning environment
- graduate attributes
- recognition of qualifications
- employment and further study
- industry and professional recognition
- risk management in relation to learning outcomes.

#### 3.2 *The Learning Paradigm and Graduate Attributes in Teaching and Learning*

The Australian Catholic University Strategic Plan (1999–2008) and the Teaching and Learning Plan 2006–2008 provide the objectives, strategies, actions and targets for achieving the learning outcomes. Still in use from the Teaching and Learning Plan 2003–2005 is the *Learning Paradigm*, which stresses a holistic student-centred approach to learning:

What value the *Learning Paradigm* adds to the style and substance of this University's existence is central to its *raison d'etre*. The University should provide the right kind of learning experiences, be they academic, spiritual, ethical or other; and the University fundamentally should be at the service of its students as it attempts to assist each of them, "its entire diversified and dispersed student body", as part of their "personal, spiritual and moral development" so that they will become "valued in employment and in the life of the community at large". The *Learning Paradigm* reflects this self-understanding of the role and purpose of the University as it aims to discern methods

and approaches that best suit the needs of the students. (Australian Catholic University Strategic Plan Working Paper No. 2 – The Learning Paradigm) (SM26 p29)

The Panel established that while there is knowledge amongst a number of staff and students of the *Learning Paradigm*, AUQA concurs with ACU National that awareness and implementation of the *Learning Paradigm* has still to be systematically embedded across the University and since a similar recommendation was made from the Cycle 1 audit the Panel believes that this is a matter for urgent address.

### **Affirmation 3**

**[urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National's recognition of the need to achieve a greater depth of understanding by staff and students about the *Learning Paradigm* and to ensure that the Paradigm is systematically embedded across the University.**

Ensuring that the induction of new academics (including sessional staff) assists in translating the *Learning Paradigm* into their academic practice will be an important element of an enhanced understanding of this key component of ACU National's approach to teaching and learning.

The current Teaching and Learning Plan (2006–2008) identifies three desired outcomes:

- Students demonstrate progress towards the achievement of graduate attributes.
- Academic programs reflect the Mission of the University.
- Academic staff demonstrate quality teaching and learning (PF p8).

The graduate attributes are understood to develop intellectual, professional and values-based traits (PF p8). There is an express commitment by the deans, associate deans, heads of school and academics to embed the graduate attributes in the University's courses and units. Increasing attention is being given to the ways in which graduate attributes are integrated into courses and assessment, as discussed below. The Panel also followed up the achievement of the second and third desired outcomes in the Teaching and Learning Plan (2006-2008) in sections 3.4.1 and 3.3, respectively.

### **3.3 The Practice of Teaching and Learning**

ACU National staff are well qualified. In the period 2003–2006 about 90% of academic staff held a master or doctoral degree, which compared favourably to the sector proportion of 80% (Data Item 5.5). In the period 2003–2005 the student/staff ratio was lower than the sector (Data Items 5.6 and 5.7).

Strategies for professional development learning for academic staff are in place. The Policy on Professional Learning for Academic Staff describes a voluntary process where staff are expected to make use of the opportunities provided by the University through the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (IATL). IATL consults the deans, the associate deans (teaching, learning and international), heads of schools and academics on their professional needs and programs are advertised on the University website. Besides these programs, the associate deans provide professional development opportunities by running specific programs in their faculties. The Director of IATL also monitors staff and student feedback to identify areas needing professional learning. All of the professional development programs are coordinated. The programs offered in 2007 had a total of more than 600 participants (SM41).

The University also offers a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GCHE) free of charge to academic staff. Since the beginning of the course in 2006, 48 staff members have registered and 13 staff are expected to complete it by mid-2008.

Staff spoke positively of the support provided for professional learning services provided by IATL and the opportunity to complete the GCHE, and formal feedback from participants in professional development programs was positive. These programs are linked to the performance review and planning program for academic staff as part of improvement in their professional learning and practice.

ACU National has an Outside Studies Program for academic staff to continue their research and scholarship or professional practice. There are also Teaching Development Grants offered each year for innovative teaching and learning initiatives. Nine grants have been awarded in 2008. All of these awards provide financial incentives for staff. The University also offers up to three Excellence in Teaching Awards each year. The Panel was able to confirm that there are some strategies in place to ensure that the benefit of all these initiatives and good practices are shared across the campuses and schools. Given the multi-campus nature of ACU National, further consideration could be given to the need to ensure that the maximum benefit from these initiatives and awards is systematically derived for all academic staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The recognition of academics by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) is an acknowledgement of achievement in the practice of teaching and learning at ACU National. Seven citations were awarded to academic staff in 2006 for outstanding contributions to student learning. A further nine were awarded in 2007. Besides this, ACU National has received ALTC (formerly Carrick Institute) grants and in 2007 won the Neville Bonner Award for work in Indigenous education.

In the context of the voluntary nature of professional development, ACU National will need to ensure that all academics in need of, or who would benefit from, professional training do in fact access it.

### 3.3.1 Student Evaluations

There are a number of systems in place at ACU National for student evaluation of teaching and learning.

The Unit Evaluation Program which is used to monitor course units employs an instrument with 12 common core questions and eight questions that can be selected from a large item bank. Units are evaluated on a two-yearly cycle with consolidated results published on the University website.

The Student Evaluation of Teaching survey is designed to gather student perceptions of the quality of a lecturer's teaching. Data gathered by this instrument can be used for individual professional development and to support an academic's application for promotion, and performance or probation review. IATL is trialling Student Evaluation of Teaching instruments which are suited to tutorial and sessional staff. Given the number of sessional staff teaching at ACU National, AUQA encourages the University to finalise and implement the regular use of these instruments.

Reports from students were inconsistent about how they are informed about improvements made as a result of their feedback, although students indicated that many unit outlines carry

information on improvements that have been made as a result of the surveys. From 2009 there will be a standard unit outline template which will include feedback on previous evaluations to students.

Staff confirmed that academics use the feedback, including in performance reviews and for improvement of units. Up until July 2008, the results of the student evaluations of teaching were confidential to the staff member concerned, and it was voluntary for staff to submit student evaluations for the performance review with the head of school. The procedure has been changed with the intention that heads of schools now receive these results.

The Panel heard of some actions which were related to use of its internal student data in the faculties, for example, in teaching evaluations, lecturer probation processes and for improvement of units and courses. Faculties will have to systematically make greater use of the collected data to drive quality improvements.

The Panel supports the University's intention to further improve its approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning which was the subject of a recommendation from the Cycle 1 audit and believes this should be given urgent attention.

#### **Affirmation 4**

**[urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National's recognition of the need to improve its overall approach to the collection and use of student evaluation data for monitoring and quality improvement purposes.**

ACU National makes use of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) to compare the University's performance with other institutions. Commentary on outcomes signalled by data from these surveys is provided in section 3.6.2. The use of survey results and their analysis are being given greater attention. The Panel noted that the proposed Office of Planning and Strategic Management will strengthen this area, as will IATL through conducting analyses of the teaching and learning data and making it available to staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

As a consequence of the students rating the achievement of generic skills below the sector (section 3.6.2), ACU National has recently analysed the qualitative responses using CEQuery in order to understand the nature of student perceptions. The Panel heard from a range of staff and students that a possible reason for the low rating on generic skills is because students are unable to link their learning with the use of the term 'generic skills' in the questionnaire. There was no evidence provided to support this assertion. Whilst the analysis of the reasons for the low ratings continues, explicit attention is now given in course and unit outlines, and in delivery to identifying generic skills. Academic staff now ensure students are made aware of the ways in which generic skills are integrated into each unit's learning outcomes and assessment. The Panel confirmed with staff and students that this is indeed happening. While this response may address the specific issue relating to generic skills, ACU National should strengthen the institutional analysis of other trends in order to assist academic staff to make improvements. One area for attention is a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the drop in 2006 of the institutional rating for the Good Teaching Scale of the CEQ and in particular, the decline in rating from previous years particularly within the education discipline with its high student numbers (Data Item 5.8).

The GDS in the period 2002–2006 showed that ACU National performed above the sector in graduate full-time work, but lower than the sector for full-time study. The Panel heard that these outcomes could be related to the professional nature of the courses offered at the University and that graduates often returned for further studies after some years of work. Given the concerns noted in section 2.2 about workforce renewal, the University might consider the potential benefits of encouraging and supporting graduates to continue their studies in order to join the ACU National staff.

ACU National has participated in the recently launched Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE). The results provide some positive indications regarding value issues relating to the distinctive mission of the University with ACU National students rating their experience higher than the average Australian wide response. It will be useful to have in the future a series of data from the survey to establish a consistency of superior performance and to demonstrate a robust use of survey information in quality assurance.

### **3.4 Course Content and Assessment**

#### **3.4.1 Course Development, Implementation and Review**

ACU National has in place well documented and comprehensive policies and procedures on course approval, amendment and review. The requirements include course design, quality and integrity; resource analysis; alignment with the ACU National's Mission; and a curriculum proposal with an assurance that the course will be recognised by the relevant industry or professional association, and applicable government accreditation authority.

There is a rigorous process in place from course development and review committees to endorsement by faculty boards to approval by Academic Board. Two external moderators comment on each unit outline and its integration into the course. There is consultation with external bodies – professional bodies, accreditation agencies and prospective employers – which occurs in the development and review of each program. One of the requirements is the integration of graduate attributes into the course and units. Attention is given to alignment with the Australian Qualification Framework requirements.

The Panel tracked some course approval submissions which either had been turned back for refinement before final approval was granted or which were rejected.

After a review of documentation the Panel was satisfied that there exists a rigorous and thorough course development process, that the policies and procedures are kept updated and that the course review cycle is followed.

#### **Commendation 2**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the rigorous course approval process which has an explicit focus on graduate attributes.**

The University is aware that formalised feedback on courses from employers would strengthen the course review process and is considering the development of an instrument to access feedback from employers. The Panel agrees that this feedback could provide important information which could be used to identify good practice or inform improvements in the course review process.

The Panel heard of some frustration among course development and review committee members about the length of time taken for course approvals by Academic Board. It was suggested that the University consider ways of streamlining this process through, for example, a greater frequency of Academic Board meetings. While the Panel recognises that legislative requirements must be followed and that the rigour of the approval/re-approval processes must not be compromised, ACU National could consider ways in which the opportunity to fast-track course approvals, as circumstances require, can be more clearly articulated to staff.

#### 3.4.2 Professional Recognition and Employment

Given the professional nature of many of the courses, notably in nursing and education which have the highest enrolments, particular attention is focused on the professional recognition and employment of ACU National graduates. Two formal surveys were conducted in 2003 (nursing) and 2004 (education). The GDS shows that ACU National graduates find employment at a rate higher than its cohort universities and the sector (Data Item 5.14).

The Panel heard from employers that ACU National graduates are sought after because of the values, attitude and practical experience that they bring. Concerns were expressed, though, about some instances of poor English proficiency of non-English speaking students, especially in nursing. It was noted that the Faculty of Health Sciences has strategies in place which require proficiency prior to practicum placements. The Panel is of the opinion that the University must continue to carefully monitor the levels of English proficiency of non-English speaking students, especially in the professions. The Panel considers that there would be advantage in developing a regular survey of employer attitudes on the quality of ACU National graduates.

#### 3.4.3 Assessment

The University's Assessment Policy and Procedures, and other related documentation (for example, unit outlines templates), require that the assessment tasks be aligned with identified learning outcomes.

The Panel concurs that ACU National has identified learning outcomes in all its courses. Of particular importance in this integrative process is the relationship between individual course and unit learning outcomes, ACU National graduate attributes, and assessment as well as the extent to which there are shared institutional understandings of how these are linked.

The Panel heard different views about what is required under the assessment policy. First, there is confusion about whether ACU National uses a norm-referenced or a criterion-referenced approach, or a mixture of both, and the Panel could not determine whether there are clear descriptors of each level of academic grade. The explicit links between assessment, learning outcomes and the achievement of academic standards require ongoing attention. ACU National must revisit its Assessment Policy and Procedures to ensure that there is a consistent approach to assessment.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National review its assessment policy, procedures and grading criteria to clarify linkages between assessment, unit learning outcomes and graduate attributes.**

The Panel also reviewed the approach to moderation across the institution in the context of setting and maintaining of academic standards. The Panel saw evidence of some good practices in internal moderation at ACU National and some external moderation. There is institutional

commitment to further improve its moderation processes. The Panel concurs that moderation could be formalised as a measure to ensure academic standards.

#### **Affirmation 5**

**AUQA affirms ACU National's intention to embed moderation across the University and to further formalise the current approaches to intra-institutional and cross-institutional moderation to ensure academic standards.**

The Panel reviewed the proposed unit outline template to be implemented across the University in 2009. In view of the above, the Panel proposes that adjustments be made to the new unit outline to better link the assessment items with the unit learning outcomes and clarify the grading criteria.

#### **3.4.4 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure academic integrity and address plagiarism. There is an Academic Honesty Policy which is intended to prevent plagiarism and also protocols to be followed in cases of plagiarism. It is also covered in the Academic Regulations.

The Panel is satisfied that there are robust policies, procedures and training for staff and students in the area of preventing plagiarism. Students and staff are aware of the policy and procedures to be followed if plagiarism is suspected. A register of plagiarism offences is kept by the University.

The Panel noted that the University is considering acquiring plagiarism software and considers that this would further assure academic integrity.

### **3.5 *The Learning Environment***

The learning environment is a major factor in ensuring the success of students in their academic life, and particularly in the achievement of the learning outcomes. The student learning experience extends beyond the classroom and there is a range of factors which make up the student experience, including engagement with the academic staff, use of the Library and the support it offers, student administration services, other student services, Indigenous student support, support for international students, the campus environment, social, religious and sporting activities and safety on the campuses.

#### **3.5.1 Student Administration**

Student administration has policies and procedures in place which set the standards for this operational area. There is an annual Strategic Implementation Plan which focuses on achievement of continuous improvement in the quality of service provision. Students have been surveyed to ascertain satisfaction levels, for improvement and for benchmarking purposes with other universities.

An internal survey, the Quality of Administrative and Support Services for Students, is used to track student satisfaction across a range of University services, including student administration, school administration, computing laboratories, library, food and recreation. It is disaggregated by campus. On the whole there was an improvement in satisfaction between 2004 and 2006 with services at most of the campuses, except North Sydney and Ballarat campuses, where remedial action has been taken to improve student satisfaction.

The Panel confirmed with students their general satisfaction with student administration. However, a large number of academic staff and students interviewed at the three campuses indicated to the Panel that timetabling issues are a source of significant stress and inconvenience, where finding the balance between developing an ACU National timetable and accommodating the local campus needs is proving to be a challenge. The Core Planning Group acknowledges that timetabling is in need of urgent attention.

#### **Affirmation 6**

**[urgent] AUQA affirms ACU National's intention to implement a teaching timetable which meets the requirements of each campus and the University.**

#### 3.5.2 University Library

The University Library maintains six campus sites and balances local campus needs with a consistent national approach. The Library has standards and benchmarking processes in place. There is a Library Strategic Plan 2006–2009 which checks the level of user satisfaction in the context of a unified library. Key performance indicators have been set and are regularly monitored.

The Library participates in the biennial Rodski Survey. In 2008, the University Library was rated in the top quartile of institutions. Evidence was provided to the Panel of actions taken to address the recommendations of a recent Survey. The Panel was also satisfied that ACU National had addressed the recommendation of the first AUQA Audit Report dealing with funding and support for e-learning.

There have been improvements in a number of areas including a new funding model for library acquisitions (where surpluses are now carried forward), improved policies, library refurbishments, helpdesk support for students using the Learning Management System, upgraded online services and facilities, better functioning liaison librarian structures, explicit training for staff in cross-cultural issues, and continually reviewing campus library hours. The Library is also exploring its alignment with community engagement to provide access for community partners to library resources.

The University Library continues to address issues of inadequate physical space, pressure on computer and internet facilities for students and providing support for a growing University research agenda. There are plans to build a new library at the Melbourne Campus in 2011.

#### **Commendation 3**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the significant contribution to student learning outcomes made by the Library.**

#### 3.5.3 Student Services

Student Services at the University comprise the Counselling Service, the Academic Skills Unit and the Mission Engagement Team. Each of these services works to agreed standards with identified indicators of success and lines of accountability. Informal benchmarking takes place with other universities and some surveys have been completed with some universities to establish comparative standards and benchmarks for performance. The Panel reviewed the documentation and encourages ACU National to continue to explore the kinds of evidence available and use it to show the success of the services.

The support for academic staff is optimised through informal, but integrated, teamwork by the associate deans (teaching, learning and international), the IATL, and the Student Services Team. The Panel noted that these support staff are aware of how their activities and services complement one another, and they work as a team to provide the best outcomes for staff and students.

The Panel heard from both staff and students that the Counselling Service, the Academic Skills Unit and the Mission Engagement Team provide a valuable service on the campuses and that their work is closely aligned with the pastoral care for students. Staff from the Academic Skills Unit provided a number of examples, confirmed by staff and students, of strategies to support students.

Students across the campuses commented that the Academic Skills Unit and the Counselling Service are understaffed and that the demands on the services can mean long waiting periods, or provision of a limited number of consultations. It was reported to the Panel that human resources for these services are under constant review and that different modes of providing services are being explored. Meeting ESOS compliance has required that the Academic Skills Unit is better resourced on campuses with international students, namely North Sydney and Melbourne. Casual staff have been retained to strengthen the Academic Skills Unit. The 2009 budget will make provision for augmenting staff in the Student Services areas.

The Mission Engagement Team works with both staff and students. Its goals are to integrate spirituality and faith into University life, address social justice issues, promote the dignity of campus individuals and promote student life. A current discussion at ACU National is about separating issues of Catholic identity and student life under the umbrella of the Mission Engagement Team in order to give appropriate attention to both. The Team is seeking a model that can assess its success.

A careers services office was introduced at ACU National in 2008. Career advisors are available to prospective students and current students. The Panel heard from students that this is a welcome introduction by the University. As this is a new service which is being implemented, the Panel is unable to comment on its effectiveness.

#### **Commendation 4**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the support network for academic staff and students provided by the Counselling Services, the Mission Engagement Team, the Academic Skills Unit and other academic support specialists.**

#### 3.5.4 Indigenous Support

Since 1998, ACU has been expressly committed to:

- involve the Indigenous people of each local region in activities on campus
- recognise Indigenous culture with activities on each campus
- encourage greater participation of Indigenous peoples in tertiary education
- integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the University's curriculum
- join with other higher education institutions to achieve reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (PF p19).

In 2008 there are 347 Indigenous students enrolled at ACU National and 249 are part of the 'away from base' program.

There are three on-campus Indigenous Education Units which support Indigenous students by providing a range of services. These include the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, the individual support program, use of Blackboard, Facebook and MySpace programs, financial support, a 1-800 telephone support facility, cultural and religious activities, and a physical space for Indigenous students (for example at McAuley at Banyo). The Unit staff, who are role models for students, also encourage Indigenous students to consider taking up postgraduate studies.

Heavy demands are placed on the Indigenous Education Unit staff as they provide representation on many key University committees, including the Executive Team Committee, Chapter Committees, management committees, Academic Board, Research Committee, appointment committees, and various community engagement committees. Staff of the Units also provide input into issues related to Indigenous people at ACU National, for example, monitoring cultural sensitivities and supporting the away from base program which aims to ensure that expertise and skills acquired by Indigenous students remain in the local community. Unit staff also monitor the implementation of the Cultural Diversity Policy which prescribes that Indigenous issues should be reflected in all the courses. The Units also are involved in international research collaborations, for example with a Canadian Indigenous Women's Project.

Elders are asked to be members of advisory committees (both at ACU National and campus levels) and some are involved in class delivery. They are also involved in mainstream activities at ACU National. Building on the very positive commitment to Indigenous students and issues at ACU National, the lack of Indigenous representation on the University Senate may seem paradoxical and is of concern to some staff.

ACU National has been successful in providing access to and achieving success of Indigenous students (section 3.6.4) and staff and students confirmed the support which is provided by the Indigenous Education Units.

#### **Commendation 5**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the support provided to Indigenous students, including the provision of 'away from base' support which has resulted in positive access, participation, success and retention rates.**

#### 3.5.5 Online Education

There are quality assurance mechanisms to support online courses and units. The Strategic Plan for Online Teaching and Learning 2007–2009 provides the framework for the implementation and quality assurance of online teaching and learning.

In the first semester of 2008, ACU offered 16 fully online courses mainly at the postgraduate level, 69 fully online units, and 1163 units with an online component. There is a range of support personnel to assist staff and students with online teaching and learning, including online advisors and educational designers. A website and online modules project started in 2007 to provide information and online training for staff and students, including using the online library resources.

The Panel explored the quality assurance process for online provision. The lecturer in charge of a unit is responsible for the development of web-enhanced material. There seems to be some confusion about where responsibility lies for assuring quality of these web-enhanced units. The

heads of school believe that they have the responsibility for monitoring the quality of web-enhanced unit content whilst the Strategic Plan for Online Teaching and Learning 2007–2009 indicates that responsibility for online teaching and learning is mainly at the level of support units or committees. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and deans also have some responsibility. The Panel heard from students that there is some variance of quality and it was established that, given the high workloads of heads of school, there is inadequate monitoring of web-enhanced units. This is an area which constitutes some risk to ACU National.

The Panel is of the opinion that a process should be established for the systematic quality monitoring of web-enhanced courses and units, with responsibility allocated to individuals.

### **Recommendation 5**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National establish accountability for systematic quality assurance, monitoring and risk management of web-enhanced units.**

#### 3.5.6 International Students

There is a comprehensive strategic approach to internationalisation at ACU National as evidenced in the Strategic Plan for Internationalisation 2008–2012.

In 2006 a comprehensive benchmarking exercise was conducted by the Australian Universities International Directors' Forum. Comparative research was conducted in 2006–2007 on *'The Psycho-Social needs of International Students Enrolled in Degree and Diploma Courses at ACU National, MacKillop Campus, North Sydney'*. The Panel was informed that 80% of the recommendations made in the Report have been addressed. The challenge remains to ensure that all campuses benefit from the findings of the Report.

There are an increasing number of international students enrolled at ACU National. In 2007 they constituted about 21% of student numbers, mainly concentrated on the Melbourne and North Sydney campuses. International students are generally satisfied with their educational experience and feel cared for by the University. The International Office is regarded as providing basic services and acknowledgement was made that its services are constantly being improved. Some students commented on the need for increased support on arrival, for example, assistance with opening a bank account.

Ongoing areas of challenge include providing greater support for an increasing number of international students by the Academic Skills Unit, increased English language support, finding ways to better integrate local Australian and international students, both in classes and socially, and attention to ways to increase cross-cultural awareness for both staff and students.

The Panel confirmed that ACU National gives attention to the internationalisation of the curriculum, and is finding ways to integrate issues of internationalisation through community engagement initiatives in teaching and learning.

### **3.6 Academic Standards and Outcomes**

#### 3.6.1 Academic Standards

A number of the documents reviewed by the Panel refer to identifying and maintaining standards, whether these are industry standards, professional body standards, ethical standards, or academic standards. The Panel heard a wide range of views from academic staff

across the campuses in respect of what constitutes academic standards and how they are set, measured and monitored. As already identified by ACU National, this is an area for further development.

#### **Affirmation 7**

#### **AUQA affirms ACU National's recognition of the need to make explicit shared academic standards and to ensure their consistent implementation across all campuses.**

The Panel suggests that the University uses benchmarking of its standards with similar institutions and programs to identify and validate appropriate academic standards for ACU National.

### 3.6.2 Outcome Measures

A review of the comparative outcome indicators for Australian universities shows that ACU National performs well in a range of areas, and requires improvement in others.

In the period 2003 to 2005, ACU National's attrition rate for domestic commencing bachelor students remained below the DEEWR selected cohort of comparison, but above the average sector performance. ACU National's attrition rate for international students remained below the cohort and the sector averages. In the same period, the progress rates for domestic commencing bachelor students remained above the cohort and sector. The progress rates for international commencing bachelor students improved in 2005 to remain above the cohort and sector (Data Item 5.11).

As indicated in section 3.5.4, from 2002–2006, the University has achieved a higher Indigenous student access rate than the sector (Data Item 5.12). In the success ratio of Indigenous students ACU National also has achieved results higher than the sector (Data Item 5.13).

The GDS shows that in the period 2003–2006, ACU National's percentage of graduates in full-time work was higher than both the sector and the cohort (Data Item 5.14). Consequently, in the same period, the graduates in full-time study remained significantly below the cohort and the sector (Data Item 5.15).

An increasingly positive trend is noticeable in the CEQ with respect to good teaching in the period 2003–2006, although there are drops in 2004 and 2006 (Data Item 5.16).

The CEQ shows that in the period 2003–2006 student perception of generic skill acquisition remained below the cohort (Data Item 5.17). This is somewhat in contrast to the ACU National Unit Evaluation Program for the period 2004–2006 (Data Item 5.9). As discussed above, the University is investigating why this is the case.

In respect of overall student satisfaction, the CEQ shows that the scale remains on par with the cohort trend line (Data Item 5.18).

The first AUSSE which measures student engagement was conducted in 2007 and ACU National students show higher mean scores than Australian students in general. Commentary on the survey and its outcomes is provided in section 3.3.1.

Given that ACU National is developing a new Strategic Plan with key performance indicators, the University should consider what other measures and outcomes data would complement the

above measures and surveys to assure itself and its stakeholders of its level of achievement. This is particularly pertinent to measuring the success of the University's learning outcomes and community engagement.

## 4 THEME: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A central component of the mission of ACU National is community engagement and the University has in recent years put in place formal structures to realise the objectives for this core function. It was therefore appropriate as a theme for this audit. The University sees community engagement as integrally linked to and embedded in its core functions of teaching and learning, and research. The University requested that AUQA evaluate its particular approach to community engagement and how community engagement might be more effective in the realisation of the University's mission.

AUQA agreed that the scope of this theme is:

- strategic national approach
- approach to and scholarship of engagement
- mutuality and reciprocity in community engagement
- relation of community engagement to teaching, learning and research
- structures, roles and responsibilities for community engagement
- stakeholder engagement
- management of community engagement partner relationships
- values and identity as expressed in community engagement
- offshore community engagement
- strategies for informing public policy and practice
- transformative nature of community engagement for staff and students
- risk management in relation to community engagement.

### 4.1 *The Concept of Engagement*

The Core Planning Group approved the following definition of Community Engagement in September 2007:

Community engagement is the process through which ACU National brings the capabilities of its staff and students to work collaboratively with community groups and organisations to achieve mutually agreed goals that build capacity, improve wellbeing, and produce just and sustainable outcomes in the interests of people, communities, and the University. (PF p34)

The approach to community engagement at ACU National is informed by the ACU Mission, which articulates explicit engagement with the 'social, ethical and religious dimensions of the questions it faces in teaching, research and service'. In the early years of ACU National, there was a community 'service' thrust which sat easily with the professions of teaching and nursing. The mission and the professional nature of the disciplines converged in the context of experiential learning and the individual community outreach initiatives by staff and students. In recent time this has changed to a community 'engagement' emphasis which stresses mutuality of benefit for ACU National, its staff and students, and community partners (SM26 Teaching and Learning Plan 2006–2008 pp34-35).

Community engagement is understood at ACU National as:

- a key means of advancing its Mission in serving the common good and enhancing the dignity and well-being of people and communities, especially those most marginalised or disadvantaged
- integral to its teaching, learning and research
- affirming relationships that depend on trust and genuine partnerships with community organisations, institutions and corporations (PF p34).

A striking aspect of the conceptualisation of community engagement at ACU National has been its focus on social justice. Rooted in Catholic social teaching, community engagement is a distinguishing feature of ACU National as a Catholic university. There is a significant justification on ethical grounds for undertaking community engagement. A large proportion of the University's activities undertaken by staff and students are in partnership, and support those who are socially disadvantaged, excluded or poor. Staff and students are actively encouraged to be involved in initiatives which have a social justice dimension.

Another characteristic of ACU National's approach is the desire to fully integrate community engagement into teaching, learning and research. One of the employment criteria for academic and general staff is the support of the University's commitment to community engagement, including integrating community engagement into teaching, learning and research. Students are expected to participate in specific community engagement activities in their courses, often not credit-bearing, but as a necessary requisite to graduate. Academics are encouraged to link their community engagement activities and research work.

A mapping process has been conducted to identify the range of community engagement activities which are taking place across the University. The Panel confirmed that there are a number of laudable activities in place. There is a consistent awareness and understanding by staff and students of the centrality of community engagement to ACU National's mission and that it is integrated into teaching, learning and research.

The Panel heard consistently from staff, students and community partners that there is a developing understanding of community engagement and all support the shift from service to engagement. A further refinement is the greater emphasis on reflective practice and on 'engagement' with the community for mutual benefit. There are discussions taking place at national and campus levels, and across faculties and schools.

### **Commendation 6**

**AUQA commends ACU National for achieving a shared understanding among staff, students and partners of the University's intention to shift from a community service to a community engagement paradigm.**

The Panel noted that there has been support and encouragement at the highest levels in the University for the development and implementation of the community engagement concept. Examples include the Statement on Community Engagement (2002), and the establishment of the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) in 2003 at the initiative of the Vice-Chancellor and the establishment of the Institute for the Advancement of Community Engagement. There is high level encouragement for staff conference attendance and study tours in the area of community engagement, and consulting with, and inviting community engagement scholars to work with the University community and active seeking of feedback from the communities with whom ACU National engages. This has provided a context for the advancement and development of community engagement at ACU National.

An Interim Community Engagement Strategic Support Plan (April 2008) sets out the agenda for community engagement at ACU National. There are five goals in the Plan:

- Staff and students will understand and commit to community engagement.
- The University will be accessible and responsive to the community and the voice of communities will be heard in the forum of the university.
- Community engagement will be a formal part of the University's teaching, research and international activities.
- The University will know its strengths in community engagement and will concentrate support on them.
- The University will establish effective systems for coordinating, monitoring and tracking community engagement and will seek continuously to improve its practices (SM56).

The Plan has clearly identified strategies, allocated responsibilities, timeframes and indicators of success. Key performance indicators have yet to be set.

The new Community Engagement Framework seems to be a valuable organising strategy which will assist the University to understand how activities fit the overarching community engagement objectives at the same time as preserving the essential nature of engagement with the local communities. The Framework identifies three organising areas, Beyond Disadvantage, Beyond Borders and Beyond Differences, and is currently under consideration by the Core Planning Group.

It will be essential that the new University Strategic Plan sets out key performance indicators for community engagement and that these are reflected in support plans and enacted at the faculty and school level. The linking of the various strategies will also be essential to achieving a coordinated approach.

The Panel proposes that a central consideration should be the embedding of community engagement in teaching, learning and research. The Teaching and Learning Plan 2006–2008 has already introduced the concept of community engagement in teaching and learning (SM26 pp32-37). There is also discussion in the faculties about and some explicit linking of community engagement to research, as evidenced by research which has either been completed or is underway. The success of the Community Engagement Framework will depend on a consultation and communication strategy to ensure that there is a shared understanding and acceptance by staff in the faculties and schools of the Framework.

#### **Affirmation 8**

**AUQA affirms ACU National's development of a draft framework for community engagement and encourages the University to use it to embed community engagement in teaching and learning, and research.**

#### **4.2 *Community Engagement Leadership, Alignment of Structures, Resourcing and Rewards***

As the understanding of community engagement has matured at ACU National, so too has the leadership, alignment of structures and allocation of resources and rewards. Support by Senate, the allocation of senior management responsibility, and the establishing of community engagement structures are important steps in the integration of community engagement practice across the University.

#### 4.2.1 Leadership and Alignment of Structures

Senate is committed to ensuring that community engagement is coordinated, embedded and made sustainable. State Chapters (campus advisory committees, which include external stakeholders) present opportunities for discussion with campuses about the ways in which community engagement is integrated into University activities.

The Vice-Chancellor is giving explicit leadership in signalling the next steps for community engagement, which include:

- the importance and distinctiveness of the University's community engagement;
- an understanding of community engagement within the University as well as in the higher education generally;
- embedding community engagement in teaching/learning and research; and
- principles for consolidating and coordinating community engagement (SM169 Academic Board Report 23 July 2008).

The Vice Chancellor is also keen to shift the outcomes of community engagement to include the influencing of public policy.

At the level of senior leadership, a pro-vice-chancellor holds the portfolio of community engagement. This involves taking responsibility for the Community Engagement Strategic Support Plan, the recently established Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) and working with the CEAC. The intended change in leadership arrangements with dedicated portfolios will allow for more focused leadership in key areas, including community engagement. This change presents the University with the opportunity to take community engagement to a new level.

IACE was established in 2006. Its role is to promote, develop and support community engagement across the University. It sees its task as providing strategic support and facilitating reflection on community engagement in the University, rather than running community engagement projects. This includes helping academics to develop both quantitative and qualitative measures to track, for example, the impact of their projects. In order to embed community engagement across the University, the director of IACE sits on key institutional committees, such as the Academic Board which ensures that the community engagement perspective is advocated at institutional level discussions and deliberations. The establishment of the IACE is recognised by staff as adding value to the embedding of community engagement in teaching and learning, and research.

The work of CEAC provides a forum for discourse and reflection about engagement. The Panel noted the positive contribution that is made by external members on this Committee and recognises the participation of external members as a good practice.

#### **Commendation 7**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the high level commitment to, and support for, community engagement as evidenced by the establishment of the Institute for Advancement of Community Engagement, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee and the strong leadership provided for the development and promotion of community engagement across the University.**

There is a developing understanding of the ways in which community engagement and research intersect at ACU National. There are examples of multidisciplinary research initiatives which

have had impact on community engagement and these are increasingly evident in the University's research.

Whilst there are some excellent examples of embedded research in community engagement projects, the Panel concurs with the University that there is a need for research leadership at the ACU National level to actively promote the embedding of community engagement into University research activities. This should include increasing strategically linked engaged research funding, tagging research funding for research into community engagement, and ensuring that research workloads reflect this.

A recent initiative linking research, community engagement and discipline expertise is the proposed establishment of an institute for advancing public policy. It is intended that the institute will complement other ACU National community engagement and public good initiatives and have an impact at national policy level. The rationale for the proposed institute is:

An institute for advancing public policy espousing the principles of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and common good can focus the University's contribution to public policy debates in Australia in a way that clearly establishes the University's presence, maximises its influence, draws upon its unique community experience, and faithfully expresses the mission that the Church has articulated for Catholic universities. (SM162 Transforming Public Policy Final Report May 2008 p10)

The Panel considers that such an initiative has the potential to advance the research and community engagement agenda of the University.

#### 4.2.2 Resourcing and Rewards

Resource allocation is provided to support community engagement, for example, the establishment of IACE, resourcing of some projects (for example, the Clemente Australia program) and time release for staff to provide campus based coordination for community engagement. There is a reward system to recognise community engagement achievements for staff. Further attention will need to be given in the final Workload Policy to recognition of the time required for successful community engagement (section 2.2).

The Panel heard about a number of examples of formal training and mentoring for academics who are involved in community engagement. Workshops and support are offered by IACE to support staff. Staff indicated that, while IACE is still quite a new structure, it provides a valuable service to the faculties. As community engagement is embedded in the range of University activities, it will become necessary to provide relevant professional development and support.

The ACU National promotion criteria provide some recognition of a staff member's contributions to community engagement. As community engagement becomes more sophisticated, consideration should be given to recognising community engagement as a criterion for promotion in its own right.

#### 4.2.3 The Participation of Students in Community Engagement

As part of the ACU Mission, students are expected to undertake a compulsory, non credit-bearing community engagement activity during their course and their graduation is dependent on this. Each faculty and school has the opportunity to arrange course appropriate community engagement for students to complete this requirement.

Students are briefed before participating in community engagement activity and their activity is supervised and evaluated by academic staff and by a supervisor at the placement. Students are encouraged to keep reflective journals. The Panel confirmed that, in general, staff and students are enthusiastic about the integration of community engagement into the courses, and that a number of students continue to engage after the compulsory activity is completed. There are ongoing discussions about the ways in which community engagement can be further embedded in teaching and learning, where learning activities and assessment encompass community engagement. In respect of the compulsory nature of community engagement, ACU National may like to consider the use of the term 'voluntary', when it is, in fact, a compulsory part of a student's course.

#### **4.3 Review and Improvement for Mutual Benefit**

The University has a large number of successful community engagement projects across all campuses. The community projects involve partners across the religious, public, private and inter-institutional arenas (Data Item 5.19). Some of the projects have been in place for many years. Community partners confirmed that there is a very positive appreciation of the community engagement approach at ACU National, that mutual benefit is a guiding principle, and that staff and students are ethical and genuine in their engagement activities. Comments and feedback are sought after activities and partners are informed about the use of the feedback. Partners also mentioned that the University provides resources to ensure that engagement projects are sustainable. Partners are aware and supportive of research activities which are linked to the community engagement. They also advised the Panel that in some cases they have approached the University with project ideas, and these have resulted in outcomes such as the co-sponsored chair into research on ageing.

There are some significant community engagement projects which have had wide press coverage, for example, the campus precincts, the Fitzroy precinct in Melbourne, the Clemente Australia project and the Baucau precinct in East Timor. In Brisbane there is the Brisbane North Development Forum and the engagement with Indigenous communities at a range of levels, and the 'Art from the Inside' project which reaches beyond a notion of community engagement focused on offering 'welfare'. There are growing community engagement partnerships in Ballarat. Faculties and schools have formalised community engagement programs which draw on the strengths of the professions, including, nursing, education, social work, business, art and music. There is noticeable commitment and enthusiasm by staff and students, in such projects as supporting the 'Homeless World Cup', the 'Choir of Hard Knocks', student activities in communities in India by the School of Arts and Sciences (Vic), supporting the Karen refugees on the Thai-Burma border, and working in health clinics in Vanuatu. Besides the high profile programs, many less visible community engagement projects are undertaken by staff and students. The Panel was made aware of the careful planning that goes into setting up community engagement initiatives, for example, in developing the Clemente Australia program at the Ballarat Campus which took more than a year and included seven partners.

#### **Commendation 8**

**AUQA commends ACU National for the wide range of effective community engagement partnerships in operation across the disciplines and campuses of the University.**

In embarking on a formal community engagement project, ACU increasingly uses a memorandum of understanding (MOU). MOUs include the responsibilities and expectations of each party, risk assessment and management and quality assurance. There is some

inconsistency across the University in addressing issues of ethics clearances, agreement of project outcomes, clarification of mutual benefits and a protocol to conclude community engagement partnerships. The Panel encourages the University ensure that a basic MOU template for community engagement is developed and implemented consistently in the University's community engagement partnerships. The Panel concurs with ACU National that this is an area in need of attention.

#### **Affirmation 9**

**AUQA affirms ACU National's recognition of the need to use memoranda of understanding with partners to provide a consistent approach to community engagement activities.**

One area of concern in community engagement which the Panel noted relates to the risk management of community engagement activities. The Panel is aware of some good practices in managing risk, for example, not including students in the Clemente Australia program at this stage of its development, or the preparation and briefing of students on the protocol should threats to their own or the partner's safety arise. However, there were also some instances where there has been insufficient attention given to protocols to deal with unexpected serious situations which might arise. The Panel is of the opinion that further attention must be given to identifying and managing potential risks.

The Panel believes that there is need to develop further the policies and procedures for the way partners are selected, and risk is managed for community engagement.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National ensure that a risk management approach is taken when establishing community engagement partnerships.**

#### **4.4 Evidence of the Reach and Range of Community Engagement**

One of the challenges facing ACU National is the identification and use of performance indicators in community engagement. Linked to the 'culture of evidence' approach at ACU National, a number of indicators were identified in 2003 for teaching and learning, research, and income generation. From 2004–2006 CEAC was asked to consider appropriate indicators for community engagement at ACU National. A document, Performance Indicators for Community Engagement (2006) sets out the state of the discussion. Categories of engagement, principles which inform community engagement and a set of interim indicators were recommended as an interim arrangement. The indicators were, by and large, quantitative measures, providing largely a count or audit of community engagement initiatives. No targets or qualitative indicators were proposed (SM59). These indicators have yet to be fully implemented.

ACU National recognises that the impact of community engagement needs to be tracked. The task is to find ways to move beyond, for example, counting 'footprints' or the number of community engagement activities. There is a need to be able to track the efficacy of engagement activities, to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of projects, possibly by using qualitative measures of impact on the University, staff, students and partners. IACE is engaging with staff to explore appropriate performance indicators for community engagement which balance the quantitative and qualitative aspects and will satisfy the demands of accountability. Given the development of the new Framework and model for community engagement, and the development of the new Strategic Plan, it is anticipated that the performance indicators will become more sophisticated.

### **Recommendation 7**

**AUQA recommends that ACU National ensure that effective community engagement key performance indicators are derived from the proposed Community Engagement Framework, aligned with the new Strategic Plan and reflected in support plans.**

Each project potentially has an associated research element. Evaluating and reporting on projects will enable the University to report more fully on successes, and to identify the benefits of community engagement and the impact of each project. The University may have to consider the allocation of funding to support such evaluation projects.

ACU National has done some benchmarking of its community engagement initiatives against international agencies and networks, and also has benchmarked against good practice in community engagement in other universities. The Panel encourages the University to put in place a formal benchmarking system for community engagement which would allow it to better define the outcomes it wishes to measure and establish appropriate indicators by which to track the desired outcomes, for example, through the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA).

#### **4.5 Standards in Community Engagement**

As has already been noted, while there is some discussion of standards underway at ACU National, it will be important for the University to identify the standards it wishes to use for community engagement. While there have been some benchmarking activities which have taken place, strategies for benchmarking the full range of community engagement initiatives against other institutions which are advanced in this area must be further formalised and integrated into University planning, risk management and quality management processes. It is recognised that finding suitable community engagement benchmarking partners will not be easy to achieve, but that participation in AUCEA is a starting place. It is acknowledged that ACU National is already a contributor to the work of AUCEA.

The Panel identified a number of strategies already in place which will contribute to the measures of community engagement performance at ACU. These include:

- awards for outstanding community engagement
- benchmarking community engagement against international agencies and other institutions
- external review of community engagement at ACU National
- interim Community Engagement Support Plan
- participation in the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance
- policy and procedures for implementing, for example, Clemente Australia
- policy level integration of community engagement into teaching and learning, and research ethics guidelines
- strategies and protocols for the selection of community engagement partners
- systems to monitor its community engagement activities, both national and international use of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research Strategy.

As already noted in the previous theme, the University should consider what other measures and outcomes data would complement the above measures and surveys to assure itself and its stakeholders of its level of achievement in the area of community engagement.

## 5 DATA

### Item 5.1 ACU National student headcount and EFTSL by campus – 2007

Campus	2007	
	Headcount	EFTSL
Aquinas	525	407
MacKillop	3,051	2,288
McAuley	2,716	1,518
Mount St Mary	3,221	2,235
Signadou	699	420
St Patrick's	4,627	3,272
Virtual	974	732
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,813</b>	<b>10,874</b>

Source: ACU National website: Statistical Digest 2008 as at 29 May 2008.

### Item 5.2 ACU National undergraduate and postgraduate numbers by campus – 2007

Campus	2007		
	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Total
Aquinas	106	419	525
MacKillop	383	2,668	3,051
McAuley	819	1,897	2,716
Mount St Mary	914	2,307	3,221
Signadou	227	472	699
St Patrick's	1,192	3,435	4,627
Virtual	531	443	974
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,172</b>	<b>11,641</b>	<b>15,813</b>

Source: ACU National website: Statistical Digest 2008 as at 29 May 2008.

**Item 5.3 ACU National onshore and offshore international students - 2007**

Campus	Level of Course	Onshore	Offshore	2007 Total
Aquinas	Postgraduate	-	-	-
	Undergraduate	3	-	3
<b>Aquinas Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>
MacKillop	Postgraduate	288	2	290
	Undergraduate	1,383	3	1,386
<b>MacKillop Total</b>		<b>1,671</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1,676</b>
McAuley	Postgraduate	34	2	36
	Undergraduate	314	16	330
<b>McAuley Total</b>		<b>348</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>366</b>
Mount St Mary	Postgraduate	64	1	65
	Undergraduate	71	2	73
<b>Mount St Mary Total</b>		<b>135</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>138</b>
Signadou	Postgraduate	5	-	5
	Undergraduate	2	-	2
<b>Signadou Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>
St Patrick's	Postgraduate	143	3	146
	Undergraduate	612	1	613
<b>St Patrick's Total</b>		<b>755</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>759</b>
Virtual	Postgraduate	2	82	84
	Undergraduate	1	230	231
<b>Virtual Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>315</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,922</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>3,264</b>

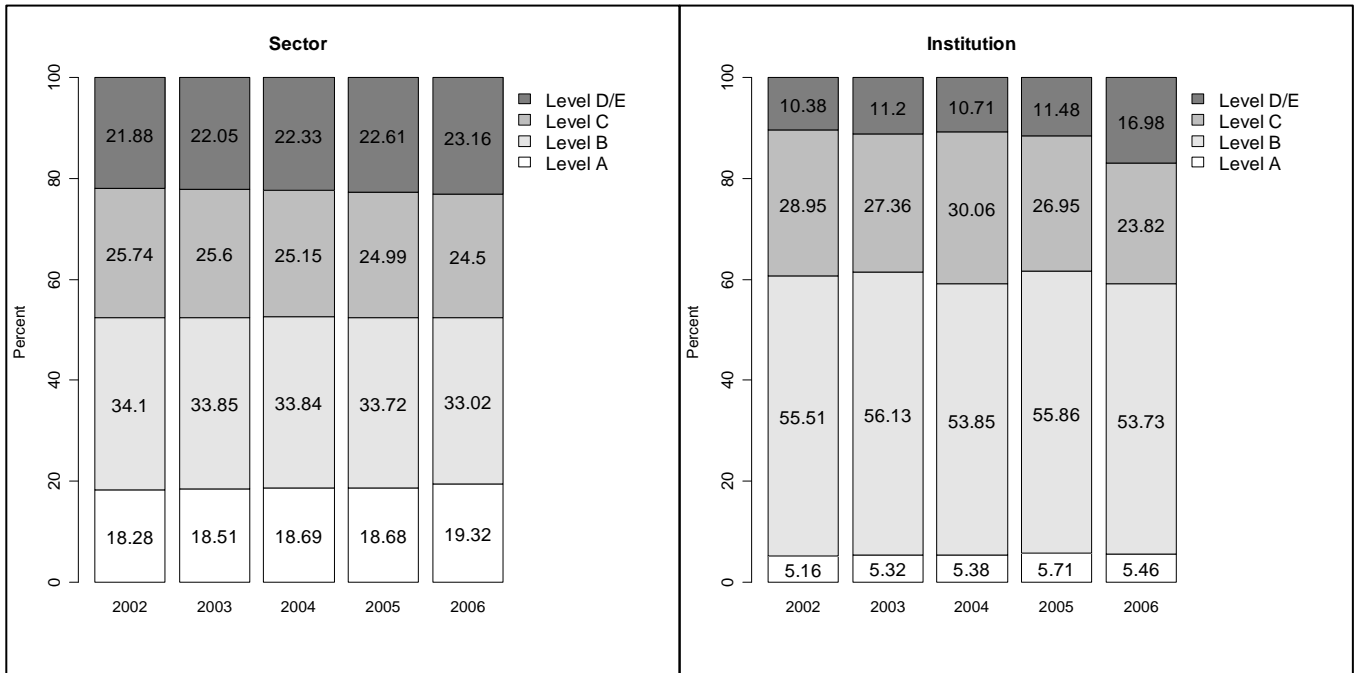
Source: ACU National website: Statistical Digest 2008 as at 29 May 2008.

**Item 5.4 ACU National and sector academic staff FTE by age group percentages**

Age Group	Academic Staff FTE by Age Group									
	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	ACU	Sector	ACU	Sector	ACU	Sector	ACU	Sector	ACU	Sector
>74	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.07
65-74	2.83	1.06	3	1.29	3.94	1.49	3.82	1.69	4.13	2
55-64	32.31	19.61	36.22	20.29	36.59	20.73	36.72	21.13	39.23	21.51
45-54	38.17	34.61	36.11	33.9	37.02	33.29	38.27	32.98	38.4	32.28
35-44	21.43	29.85	20.41	29.2	18.53	28.62	16.47	27.85	14.02	27.75
25-34	4.91	14.01	4.21	14.53	3.86	15.14	4.56	15.68	3.83	15.82
<25	0.29	0.83	0	0.76	0	0.71	0.11	0.62	0.33	0.58
<b>Total %</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total FTE</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>29981</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>30827</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>31996</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>33157</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>34144</b>

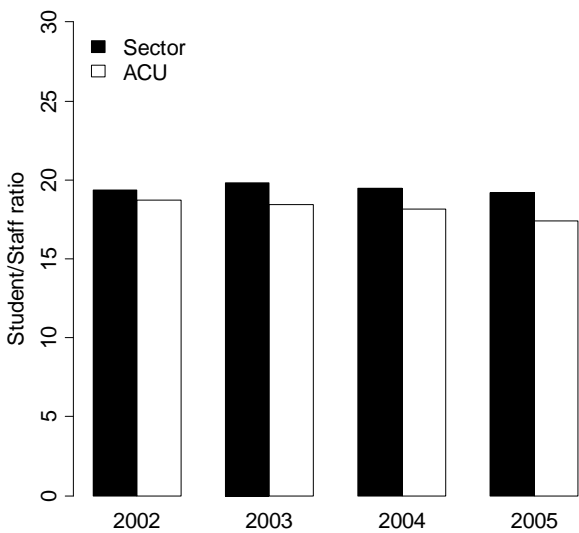
Source: Academic staff profile section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.5 ACU National total academic staff FTE by level (%), compared with sector 2002–2006**



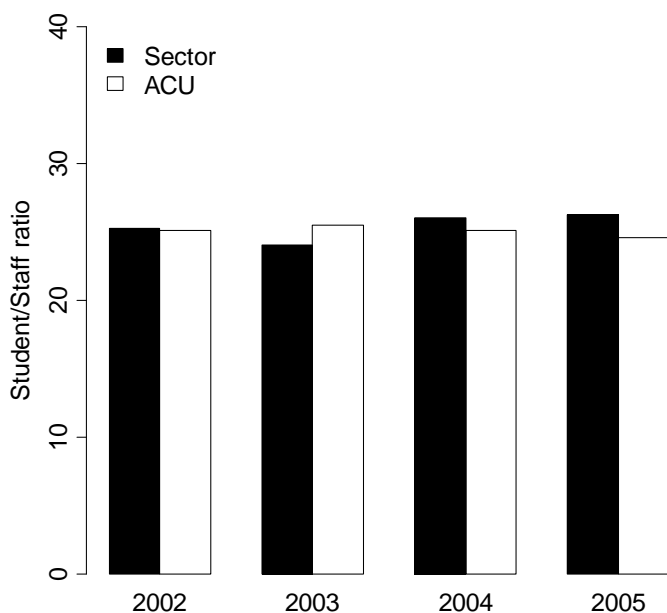
Source: Academic staff profile section of ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.6 ACU National onshore student/academic staff ratio including casual staff 2002–2005**



Source: Student/staff ratios section of ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.7 ACU National onshore student/academic staff ratio excluding casual staff 2002–2005**



Source: Student/staff ratios section of ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.8 Mean scores on the Good Teaching Scale of the CEQ for ACU National students in 2006 by field of study**

Field of study	Percentage Agreement		
	ACU National	Cohort	Sector
Information Technology	45.8	42.8	41.5
Health (excluding Nursing)	35.0	58.5	52.7
Nursing	49.4	40.0	39.7
Education	39.6	50.0	48.9
Management and Commerce	40.1	48.5	44.0
Society and Culture	67.3	57.3	60.0
Creative Arts	62.3	60.3	58.6

Source: ACU National Performance Portfolio (Draft Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio, December 2007).

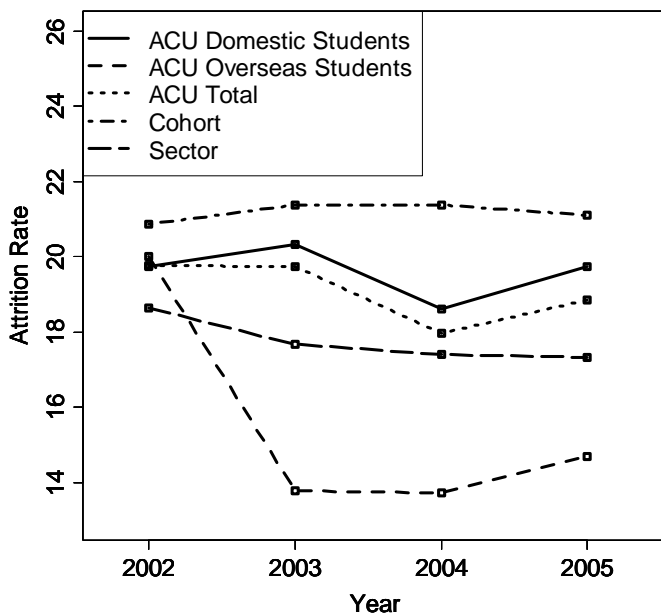
**Item 5.9 Mean scores on core items of the Unit Evaluation Program for ACU National by field of study for the years 2004 to 2006**

Scored out of a maximum of 5.

Field of Study	2004	2005	2006
Business and Informatics	3.91	3.97	4.09
Teacher Education	4.04	4.00	3.97
Humanities	3.99	4.06	4.02
Nursing and Midwifery	3.91	3.87	3.84
Natural Sciences	3.95	3.93	3.96
Social Sciences	3.99	4.01	4.07
Theology and Philosophy	3.93	3.86	4.00
Visual and Performing Arts	3.96	4.14	4.10
Technology	3.62	3.73	3.79
Exercise Science	--	3.92	4.01

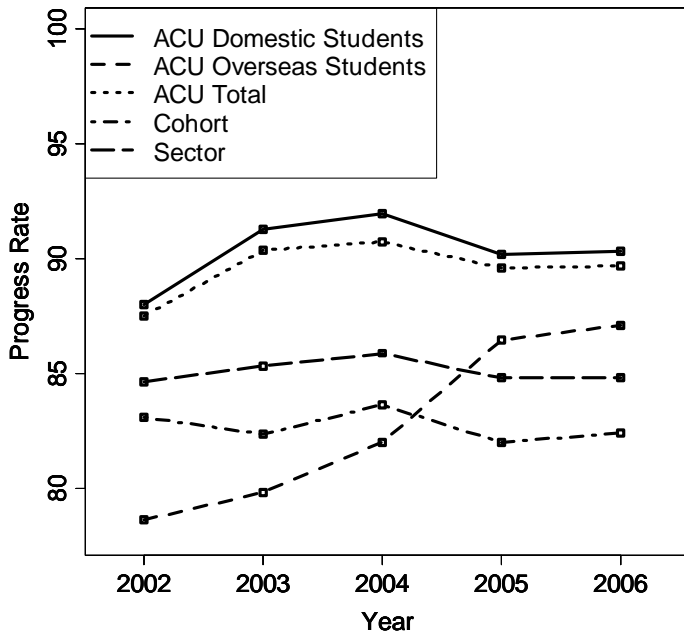
Source: ACU National Performance Portfolio.

**Item 5.10 ACU National attrition rates by category, compared with the sector and cohort 2002–2005**



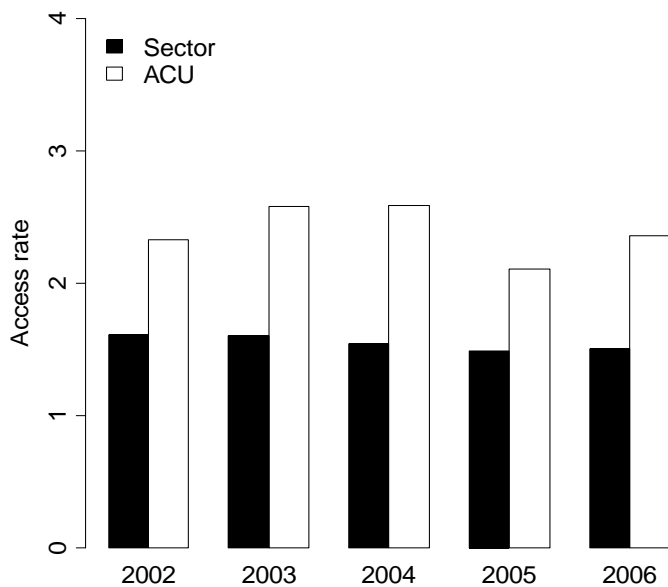
Source: Attrition and progress for commencing bachelor students from the ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.11 ACU National progress rates by category, compared with the sector and cohort 2002–2006**



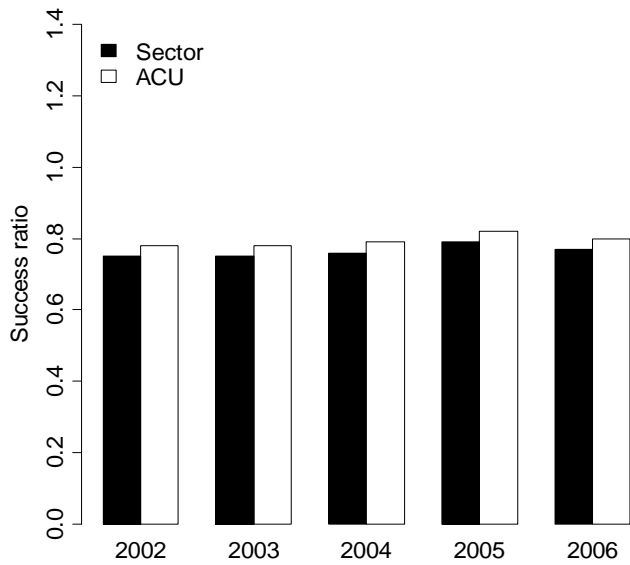
Source: Attrition and progress for commencing bachelor students from the ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.12 ACU National’s Indigenous higher education access rate indicator, compared with the sector 2002–2006**



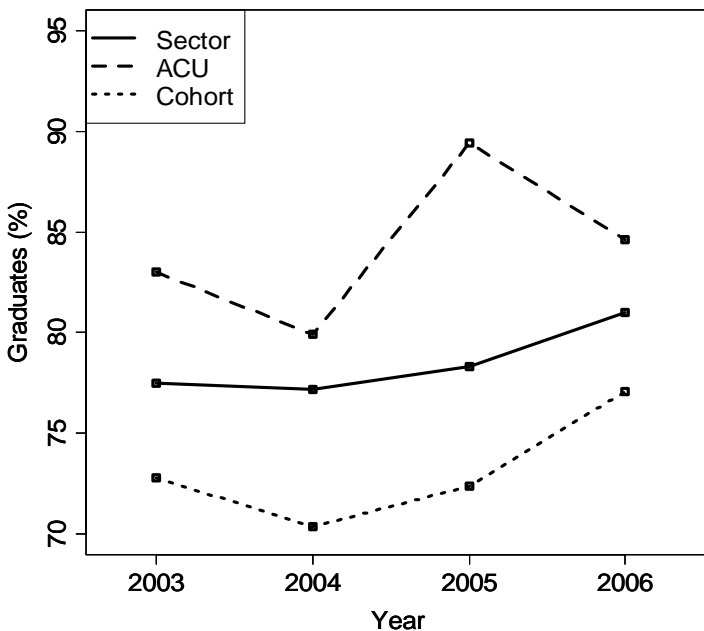
Source: Indigenous higher education performance indicators section of ACU National’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.13 ACU National's Indigenous higher education success ratio indicator, compared with the sector 2002–2006**



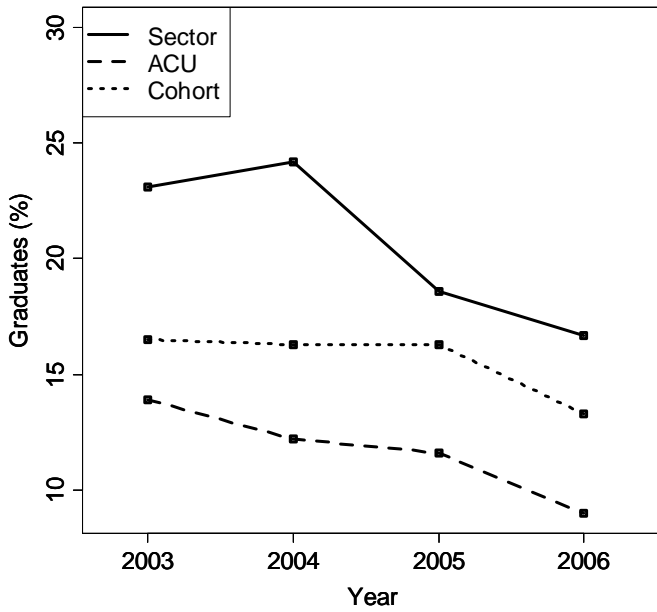
Source: Indigenous higher education performance indicators section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.14 ACU National's graduates in full-time work as a proportion of those available for full-time work, compared with sector and cohort 2003–2006**



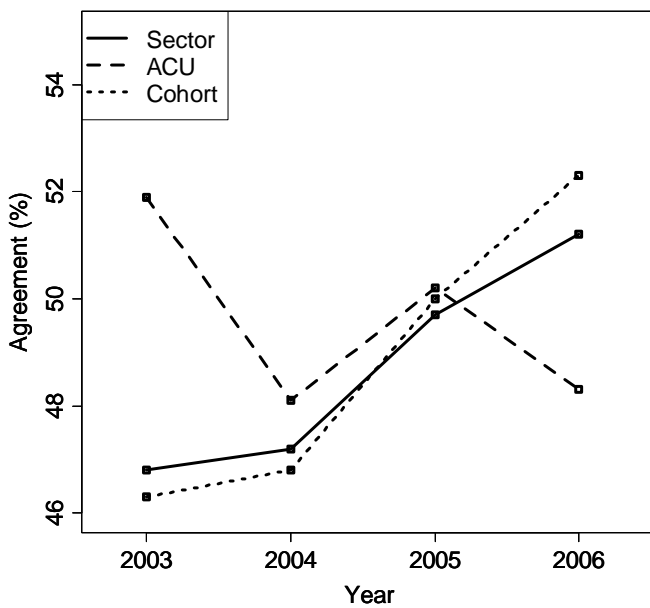
Source: Graduate Destination Survey section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.15 ACU National's graduates in full-time study as a proportion of total graduates, compared with the sector and cohort 2003–2006**



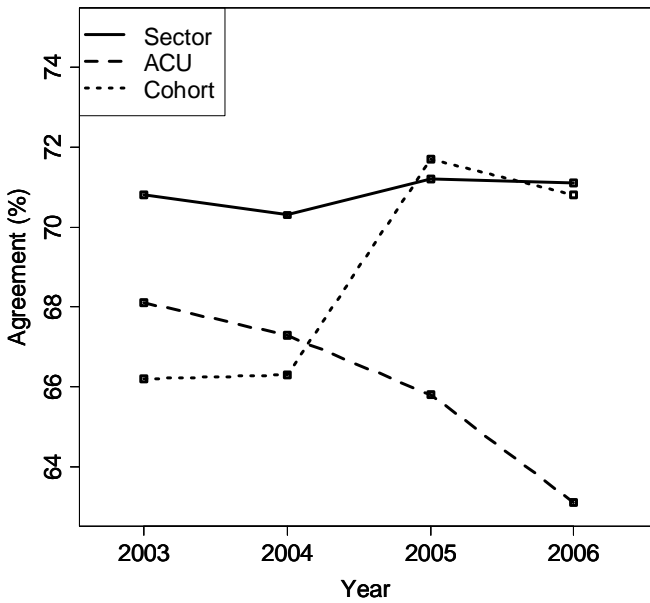
Source: Graduate Destination Survey section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.16 ACU National's Good Teaching Scale percentage agreement, compared with the sector and cohort 2003–2006**



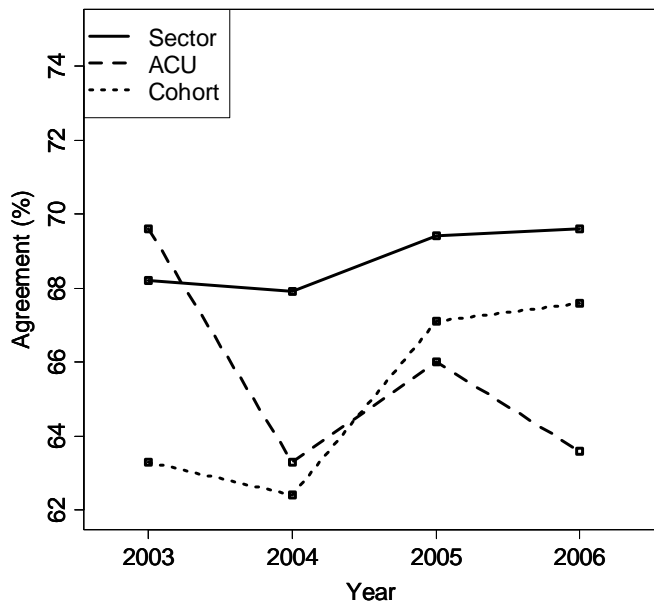
Source: Course Experience Questionnaire section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.17 ACU National's Generic Skills Scale percentage agreement, compared with the sector and cohort 2003–2006**



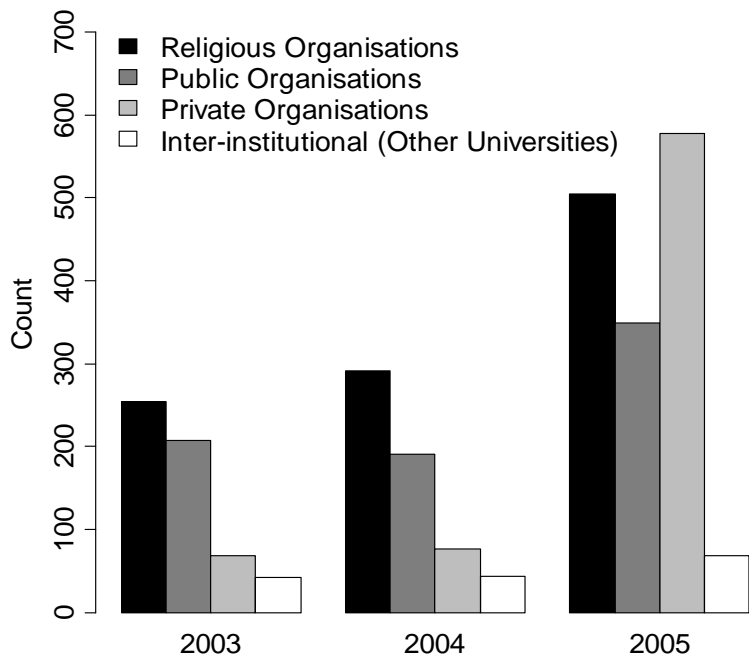
Source: Course Experience Questionnaire section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.18 ACU National's Overall Satisfaction Scale percentage agreement, compared with the sector and cohort 2003–2006**



Source: Course Experience Questionnaire section of ACU National's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.19 Count of community activities by ACU National staff by agency for the period 2003-2005**



Source: ACU National Performance Portfolio.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: THE AUDIT PROCESS

In 2007 the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of the Australian Catholic University (ACU National). Within the scope of the particular audit, AUQA's Cycle 2 audits emphasise institutional standards and performance outcomes, with attention to benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes. Full details of the Cycle 2 audit process are available in the AUQA Audit Manual.

The theme of 'Learning Outcomes', one of three proposed by ACU National, was selected by AUQA given the University's vision of learning for its students as expressed in key strategic documents. The theme aligns with the context of student-centred learning, known as the '*Learning Paradigm*' where students 'qualify for life'. Other reasons for the selection of the theme were linked to how learning outcomes are consistently achieved across the University's multiple teaching locations and modes, and due to a number of teaching and learning related recommendations from the Cycle 1 audit (eg recommendations 2, 3, 6, 9–13, and 15–19).

A second theme 'Community Engagement' was also selected by AUQA for the audit. It was chosen as it takes into account the profile of community engagement in the University's mission and its strategic importance for the University, including its engagement offshore.

The Audit Panel also selected recommendations on planning and human resources for follow-up. The recommendations on planning included the quality assurance approach (Plan, Implement, Review, Improve (PIRI)) which integrates planning, quality assurance, budgeting, key performance indicators, the use of evidence, benchmarking and risk management (recommendations 1, 4, 5, 7, 8). The other recommendation investigated dealt with workforce planning (recommendation 17).

On 16 May 2008, the Australian Catholic University presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, including 60 supporting materials. The Audit Panel met on 17 June 2008 to consider these materials.

The Audit Panel Chair and Audit Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to the University on 4 July 2008. During that visit, the answers to questions and additional information requested by the Panel were discussed, as well as the Audit Visit program. ACU National provided a further 100 documents at the Panel's request.

Visits to two of the campuses of ACU were made on 31 July to Brisbane (McAuley at Banyo) and 1 August to Melbourne (St Patrick's), respectively. A written report of these activities was circulated to the full Audit Panel prior to the main Audit Visit. The main Audit Visit to the North Sydney Campus (MacKillop) was conducted during the period 11–14 August 2008. During the Audit Visit, the Panel conducted telephone interviews with some graduates who completed their studies in Mauritius under a partner relationship.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with around 300 people in the course of the audit, including the Vice-Chancellor, the Chancellor, senior management, academic and general staff, external stakeholders, undergraduate and postgraduate students (including external, Indigenous and international students).

Open sessions were available for any member of the University community to meet the Audit Panel and one person took advantage of this opportunity.

AUQA expresses its appreciation to Professor John O’Gorman, Mr Peter May and others at ACU National for their professional and friendly assistance and organisation throughout the audit process. AUQA also thanks the University for its ready production of additional information and for granting the Panel secure access to its intranet for the period of the audit.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 14 August 2008, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by ACU as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation.

While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the University’s activities within the scope of the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings. To keep the audit within reasonable bounds, the Panel did not visit the Strathfield Campus (Mount Saint Mary), the Canberra Campus (Signadou), or the Ballarat Campus (Aquinas). For the same reason, the Panel did not explore the experience of ACU National postgraduate students in depth or the ACU National research activities.

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

### Mission

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

### Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

## Vision

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

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

## Values

AUQA will be:

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

*AUQA's Mission and Objectives were revised in March 2007, as recommended by MCEETYA. AUQA's Vision and Values have been modified accordingly.*

## **APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL**

Ms Kate Castine, Member of Council, University of Adelaide

Dr Mark Hay, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education and Director JHCER, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Professor Barbara van Ernst AM, Consultant & former Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community Engagement) and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Swinburne University of Technology

Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Charles Darwin University (Chair)

Observer:

Dr Marwan Husin, Board Member of the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, Indonesia

## 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
ACU .....	Australian Catholic University
ACU National .....	Australian Catholic University
ACUcom .....	ACU Continuing Education Division
ALTC.....	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
AUCEA.....	Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance
AUQA .....	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AUSSE .....	Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
CEAC .....	Community Engagement Advisory Committee
CEQ.....	Course Experience Questionnaire
CEQuery.....	CEQuery is software enabling university staff to analyse the opinions of students and graduates given as feedback through a variety of survey instruments such as the Course Experience Questionnaire.
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL.....	Equivalent full-time student load
ESOS.....	Education Services for Overseas Students
ESOS Act .....	<i>Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000</i> (ESOS Act) (Cwlth)
FTE .....	full-time effective
GCHE.....	Graduate Certificate in Higher Education
HR .....	human resources
IACE .....	Institute for Advancing Community Engagement
IATL.....	Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
MCEETYA .....	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MOU .....	memorandum of understanding
PF p.....	Performance Portfolio page reference
PIRI.....	Plan, Implement, Review, Improve
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
QASS .....	Quality of Administrative and Support Services for Students

