

AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITIES
QUALITY AGENCY

**Report of an Audit of
The University of Adelaide**

March 2003

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

ACUE	Advisory Centre for University Education
ARI	Adelaide Research and Innovation Pty Ltd
APARP	Academic Program Accreditation and Review Panel
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
BRED	Board of Research Education and Development
CAIRS	Centre for Aboriginal Indigenous Research and Studies
CAUL	Council for Australian University Libraries
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CRC	Co-operative Research Centre
DVC E&P	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) & Provost
DVC R	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
HDR	higher degree by research
IBP	Integrated Bridging Program
ISC	International Student Centre
IT	information technology
ITS	Information Technology Services
LTDU	Learning and Teaching Development Unit
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Industry Union
OH&S	occupational health and safety
PVC I	Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
QIB	Quality Improvement Board
QIWP	Quality Issues Working Party
SELT	Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching
ULTC	University Learning and Teaching Committee
URC	University Research Committee
VCC	Vice-Chancellor's Committee

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2001, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an audit panel to carry out an academic audit of the University of Adelaide.

The timing of this audit was of considerable concern for many in the University as there had been a substantial organisational restructure in the previous two years and numerous senior level personnel changes. The pressure on the University has been exacerbated by the need to make expenditure cuts due to budgetary pressures. The audit panel was cognisant of these concerns and recognised that many of the processes and structures it examined had been implemented relatively recently and that a number of the senior staff of the University had only recently taken up their appointments.

AUQA is appreciative of the University's professional and responsive approach to the audit. Written responses to the panel's questions and requests for further information prior to the Audit Visit were provided in a helpful format and in a timely fashion. The attention to detail in the University's logistical organisation of the Audit Visit ensured that it proceeded smoothly.

The panel acknowledges the openness and co-operation of the staff who co-ordinated the University's response to the audit and of all those (staff, students and community representatives) who met with the audit panel.

A brief introduction to the University is given in Appendix A. The objects of AUQA are shown in Appendix B. The membership of the audit panel is set out in Appendix C.

The Audit Process

AUQA audits each organisation primarily against its own objectives, while also having regard to the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Protocols and other relevant legal and statutory requirements. The major aim of the audit is to consider the organisation's performance against its stated objectives and to review the procedures in place to monitor and achieve these objectives. This involves consideration of inputs, processes and outcomes.

The University of Adelaide submitted a Performance Portfolio and supporting documentation describing its strategic directions and the range of mechanisms it has in place or is introducing to monitor the achievement of objectives, and assure and enhance quality across its core activities.

In late August 2002, the AUQA panel met to consider these materials. Subsequently, the panel requested further information in order to clarify procedures, verify data and document outcomes.

On 16 September 2002, the Panel Chair and Audit Director visited the University for a preparatory visit. During that visit, preliminary clarification of issues and additional information were sought and arrangements for the Audit Visit discussed.

The Audit Visit took place on 14-16 October 2002, with the panel assembling for a planning meeting on 13 October. The panel was based at the North Terrace campus. Several interview sessions were held at the Waite campus.

In all, the audit panel spoke with over 200 people during the Audit Visit, including the Chancellor and some external members of the University Council, the Vice-Chancellor and senior management,

academic staff, general and technical staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students and representatives of relevant unions and of the external community. A session was set aside to allow any member of the University community to meet with the panel and six people took up this opportunity.

This Report records the conclusions reached by AUQA based on the documentation provided by the University and the interviews, discussions and observations of the panel. While every attempt has been made to ascertain a comprehensive understanding of the University's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not purport to identify every quality assurance practice or to evaluate their relative effectiveness. This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit (14-16 October), and does not take account of changes that may have occurred subsequently.

The Report contains a summary of findings and lists of commendations and recommendations (in the same order as they appear in the Report). The recommendations propose for consideration possible improvements and in some cases endorse actions either already being undertaken by the University or identified as being required in the Performance Portfolio.

It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA Audit Reports may have resource implications which can pose difficulties for universities in circumstances where financial and other resources are constrained. Accordingly, the Report does not prioritise its recommendations. AUQA recognises that it is the University's responsibility to respond as it sees fit.

The panel has structured this Report in a manner similar to the way in which the University structured its Performance Portfolio. However, the nature of the audit sampling process and the conclusions reached are such that some headings and content differ between the two documents.

CONCLUSIONS

The panel made an attempt to consider the full range of activities and issues at the University of Adelaide, but chose to place greater emphasis on matters concerning leadership, the quality system, strategy and planning, teaching and learning, research and community interaction.

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations and recommendations (in the same order as they appear in the Report). It should be noted that other favourable comments and suggestions for action are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Summary of Findings

The University of Adelaide has undergone a significant amount of change and structural re-organisation over recent years. The unsettling effect that these changes have had on staff has been exacerbated by the University's recent need to make expenditure cuts in response to budgetary pressures.

Council was reviewed in 1996 by a State Government committee that had been formed to look at the governance of all three South Australian universities (the McGregor Report). Consequent changes to the Council's Constitution came into effect in early 1997. This was followed by a review of Council committees. Attention is now being directed at initiatives to enable the Council to exercise its important governance role in the quality assurance processes of the University, in particular by instituting mechanisms for it to monitor systematically the performance of management against plans and strategic objectives. The Chancellor has recently implemented review processes through which Council may improve its operation and is supported by the panel for this. The induction process for new student representatives on Council is also commented on favourably by the panel.

Management structures at the University have been significantly reviewed, with recent appointments to a number of senior executive positions. The redefinitions in the roles of Executive Dean and Head of School are noted and recommendations made for strengthening the development and support of these staff.

A review of Academic Board in 1997 indicated that it did not have a significant role in advising Council on academic matters. It is to the University's credit that this review has been acted upon and the Board has subsequently been re-shaped. In reclaiming its role as the principal academic body within the institution, Academic Board needs to strengthen significantly its ability to maintain an oversight of academic activities University-wide. In particular, emphasis needs to be placed, as a priority, on ensuring that its mechanisms for assuring the quality of teaching and learning activities are operating effectively across the University. The audit panel makes a number of recommendations in this regard.

The development of a new Strategic Plan for the University has been foreshadowed. The panel recommends that current planning initiatives be given high priority with a view to an early adoption of a more systematic approach than has been evident in the past. The importance of integrating strategic and operational planning at University, faculty, school and divisional levels, and providing for a rigorous process of reporting on performance against plans is emphasised. The panel encourages the University to continue its program of budget process reform.

The panel found little systematic use of quantitative indicators or external benchmarking to monitor institutional performance. The panel supports the University's commitment to this area as a strategic

approach to enhancing quality assurance activities. There is a key role for Council in monitoring University performance against such measures.

AUQA commends the University for the thorough and open manner of the self-assessment undertaken prior to the audit and for the identification of specific strategies intended to address those areas identified as requiring improvement. The University's quality framework does not as yet appear to be having a tangible impact in the faculties and divisions and there is a need for integration and implementation of quality assurance systems across the institution. The new Office of Planning and Development has the potential to serve as a focus for co-ordination of a more systematic continuous improvement cycle.

With respect to staffing issues, the panel discusses the current approaches being taken to the induction of new staff, staff development and performance review and makes recommendations in these areas. The effectiveness of communication between senior management and staff at all levels is a matter that the University has recognised requires attention and the panel encourages continued work on the development of a communications strategy. The commitment and loyalty of the staff to the University were evident to the panel, as was their pride in the University's achievements to date. In addition, the panel noted positively the emphasis being placed by both the representatives of staff associations and the University management on a willingness to begin rebuilding mutual trust and confidence in their relationship.

The University has identified in its Performance Portfolio the need to develop strategies for the ongoing reform to student support and administrative services and a comprehensive internal review of the 2002 enrolment process is evidence of attention in this regard. Students are represented on Council, Academic Board and its sub-committees and at Faculty Board-level. The panel formed the view that student representation on these bodies is effective.

The University has invested major resources in implementing a new suite of administrative information systems. Further development will require a greater level of ownership in the business planning currently being undertaken if the benefits of this major investment are to be fully realised.

In relation to research activity, the University has an impressive, benchmarked, national and international research reputation and a strong research culture. The University recognises that the maintenance of graduate numbers, staff incentives and external funding levels are matters of urgency and is taking steps to retain and strengthen the research culture and to remain competitive. The University has evidence of good outcomes in research across a number of research indicators, particularly on an effective full-time basis, and it is to be commended for this. AUQA also commends the University for the establishment of a number of research centres which are greatly assisting in the achievement of its objective of building critical mass and alliances with national and international institutions, industry groups and companies. Some reconsideration of the role of Advisory Boards for research centres is required. The University has developed some impressive relationships with industry groups and companies and its Research Park (Thebarton Campus) has been particularly successful and is commended. The University recognises that further emphasis should be placed on the commercialisation of research and a new entity to oversee research commercialisation has been recently created to replace the former company, which was having difficulty processing contracts in a timely fashion and had unreliable financial reporting systems.

The panel supports the increased attention being paid to reviewing the effectiveness of the University's research training program over recent times, to restructuring of the units that manage and administer the program, and to policy development. Indeed, the Board of Research Education and Development is specifically commended for the manner in which it has responded actively to the outcomes of the review of the higher degree by research program. The University has identified from its self-assessment, and the panel agrees, that emphasis now needs to be placed on the development of rigorous processes for policy implementation and tracking. Several specific areas are discussed

including supervision and supervisor development and resources for the support of research students. AUQA commends the University for its Structured Program for higher degree by research students.

A number of issues are identified with respect to learning and teaching at the University, curriculum rationalisation and the need for agreed processes for the review of new and existing academic programs being among them. At present, the University has no systematic means for assuring itself of its academic standards at the institutional level. It is recommended that the Academic Board, as a matter of urgency, establish a comprehensive process by which it may assure itself that the University's undergraduate pass and honours degrees are of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities. At present, there is variability across the University in the nature and extent of processes used for assuring academic standards. AUQA commends the University for initiating and responding rapidly to the external review of its central learning and teaching support services. New educational technologies are being increasingly used and a centrally supported learning management system, MyUni, has been implemented effectively, for which the University is supported.

There is clearly evidence of good relationships with the community on many levels. The panel supports the University's intention to undertake a review of the community service activities and use the findings of this review to develop a University-wide policy relating to this area. Some suggestions are made for ways in which current activities may be expanded and strengthened. One area particularly encouraged is the Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies, which plays a significant national role in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

With respect to international activities, it is recommended that the University establish robust systems for assuring itself that the terms of its agreements with off-shore education providers are being met. The University's self-assessment has identified this as an area of concern. The panel noted that the Undergraduate Entry Committee, a committee of Academic Board, is responsible for setting the entry criteria for all students and supports this. The International Student Centre, which provides support to international students studying on-shore is highly regarded by these students.

Note that the Commendations and Recommendations are not prioritised by the audit panel. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

1. AUQA commends the University for the thorough and open manner of the self-assessment undertaken prior to the audit and for the development of specific strategies intended to address those areas identified as requiring improvement. 22
2. AUQA commends the University for the establishment of a number of research centres which are greatly assisting in the achievement of its objective of building critical mass and alliances with national and international institutions, industry groups and companies. 34
3. AUQA commends the University for good outcomes in research across a number of research indicators and for a demonstrated trend of improved performance in most measures. 36
4. AUQA commends the manner in which the Board of Research Education and Development has responded actively to the outcomes of the review of the higher degree by research program. ... 38
5. AUQA commends the University for its Structured Program for higher degree by research students. 41

6. AUQA commends the University for initiating and responding rapidly to the external review of its central learning and teaching support services..... 47
7. AUQA commends the University's Research Park (Thebarton Campus) which has developed a successful business model and which supports existing companies and contributes to the establishment of start-up companies in South Australia. The Graduate Entrepreneurship Program, run at the Thebarton campus, is also commended. 52

Recommendations

1. That, as part of the planned development of a new strategic plan, agreement be reached on the form of reporting and performance indicators that will be regularly submitted to Council for monitoring purposes. 14
2. That the Academic Board strengthen its ability to maintain an oversight of the academic activities of the University and, in particular, assure the quality of teaching and learning activities. Particular attention to relationships between the Academic Board and its sub-committees and the Faculty Boards is required..... 17
3. That the recently reconstituted Faculty Boards develop, as a priority, effective mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of University policy within faculties and for assuring, in conjunction with the Academic Board, academic quality and standards. 17
4. That a mechanism be developed to ensure that the most suitably qualified candidates are appointed to the positions of Head of School, following appropriate consultation with staff within the schools..... 19
5. That improvement be made in recognising and rewarding the contributions of Heads of School so that they become attractive positions and that a suitable career structure for Heads of School be established. Furthermore, the training, development and support needs of Heads of Schools should be explicitly considered, including a review of how the Leadership Development Program meets their particular needs. 20
6. That current planning initiatives be given high priority with a view to an early adoption of a more systematic approach that seeks to integrate strategic and operational planning at University, faculty, school and divisional levels and that provides for a rigorous process of reporting on, and monitoring, performance against plans. 21
7. That, as part of the University's current budget reform process, mechanisms be established to ensure increased levels of communication of budget outcomes and their rationale; and that the development and implementation of a staged devolution strategy that affords greater budgetary responsibility and accountability to Executive Deans and Heads of School be considered..... 21
8. That further prioritisation of the planned improvements identified in the University's self-assessment take place based on an assessment of the relative priorities of these within the context of the total quality framework and after consultation with faculties and divisions; and that, once priorities are agreed, the achievement of the planned improvements is actively monitored..... 23
9. That priority be given to the development of a formal benchmarking framework, through which the University will be able to assess more accurately the achievement of its core objectives. Such a framework was under consideration by the University at the time of the audit..... 23

10. That the University's proposed post-implementation business planning being undertaken to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the new management information systems be given the highest priority by senior management and that, in undertaking that planning, the wider issues of governance, project management and change management associated with implementing the new administrative systems are taken into account. 24
11. That the goals of the induction program for new staff be considered in the light of the University's overall staffing objectives and that, once these are determined, a suitable program be implemented. 25
12. That, in developing improved staff training and development systems, the University examine such systems within comparable Australian universities and that suitable means be established for assessing how effectively the University's systems operate, in terms of both staff participation and achieving stated development outcomes..... 26
13. That the University continue its progress towards an effective process of annual staff reviews which is linked to both performance and development outcomes. Once approved, this initiative should be implemented throughout the whole University, applying equally to academic and general staff and with primary responsibility for its implementation resting with the Head of School (or equivalent). 27
14. That work proceed without delay on the development of a University-wide communication strategy that provides staff with substantive opportunities to provide feedback; and that, if it is to have a continuing role, the operations of the Communications Committee, particularly its contribution to supporting achievement of the strategy, be confirmed and progressed without further delay..... 28
15. That the University ensure that it is made clear to students during course advising that elective courses may need to be cancelled depending on student enrolment numbers and what assistance will be provided to students in this circumstance. 31
16. That, in the establishment of a research centre and in its annual reporting and review, greater attention be given to the role of Advisory Boards, particularly with respect to the validation of research programs and accessing sources of research funding..... 35
17. That the Graduate Centre ensure that the policy of co-supervision is implemented throughout the University. 39
18. That the process for the regular formal review of Masters and PhD student progress be revised, the forms simplified and the role of co-supervisors in the review process be made explicit. 39
19. That greater emphasis be placed on the training of new and existing supervisors of higher degree by research students to ensure greater awareness and implementation of University policies for effective research training. 40
20. That work proceed without delay on the planned review of the criteria and accountabilities for the review of academic programs and that a revised schedule be developed to include those programs approved prior to 2000. 45
21. That the Academic Board, as a matter of urgency, establish at the institutional level a comprehensive process by which it may assure itself that the University's undergraduate pass and honours degrees are of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities. 46

22. That the University further develop its range of other mechanisms to complement the ‘LEAP’ initiative in order to promote the sharing of good practice in approaches to learning, teaching and curriculum development. 47
23. That, as signalled in the Performance Portfolio, the University develop a system for systematic monitoring and reporting of the results of student evaluations of teaching and for providing feedback to students on the actions taken in response to those evaluations. 48
24. That the University identify a senior academic “champion” to work with the Director and staff of the Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies on communicating and implementing the Indigenous Education Strategic Plan. 50
25. That the University establish robust systems for assuring itself that the terms of its agreements with off-shore education providers are being met. The University’s self-assessment has identified this as an area of concern. 56
26. That, as signalled in the Performance Portfolio, the University develop processes for the University-wide annual review of the international student academic performance. Most benefit from this would be obtained if it were part of a broader, systematic review of teaching and learning outcomes undertaken by the Academic Board. 57

1. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 *Context*

The University of Adelaide has undergone a significant amount of change and structural re-organisation over recent years. Since these changes form the context within which the audit took place, a brief overview is presented here.

Council was reviewed in 1996 by a State Government committee that had been formed to look at the governance of all three South Australian universities (the McGregor Report). Consequent changes to the Council's Constitution came into effect in early 1997. The committees of Council were the subject of a further review in January 2002. At the time of the audit, a review of the University of Adelaide Act (1971) was underway.

The management structures of the University have also undergone a number of reviews in recent years. The Karmel Review, undertaken in 1990, led to changes to the management structure that were implemented in 1992. This and subsequent developments were taken into account by the McGregor Review in 1996. In 2001-2002, the roles and responsibilities of the executive positions were again considered. Some changes to reporting lines were made, including Executive Deans reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) & Provost (DVC E&P). There are a number of relatively recent appointees to positions at the most senior levels of the University. The current Vice-Chancellor took up his appointment in August 2002.

In 1996, the number of faculties was reduced from eleven to six. A working party was formed to undertake a review of this structure during the course of 2000 and made recommendations on a revised structure at the end of that year. Council endorsed new structures in March 2001.

Following the resignation of the then Vice-Chancellor in August 2001 and the appointment of an interim Vice-Chancellor, further restructuring was undertaken. The number of faculties was reduced from six to five with the merger of the former Faculty of Science and Faculty of Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences into a new Faculty of Sciences. Some disciplines were shifted into different academic organisational units, voluntary and involuntary redundancies of staff took place and, in most faculties, departments were aggregated into larger, multidisciplinary schools. The new faculty structures formally took effect in January 2002 and the new school structures on 1 July 2002. At the time of the panel's visit, two faculties (Humanities and Social Sciences and Sciences) were in the final stages of restructuring.

In terms of administrative services, a number of new central structures have been established in the period 2001-2002. These included an Office of the University Secretary, the Office of Planning and Development, the International Office and the Graduate Centre. These will be discussed in other sections of this Report.

At the same time as these changes were taking place, it had become clear that the University was operating at a cash deficit and a series of deficit-reduction measures related to staff recruitment, promotion and conference/study leave exacerbated the unsettling effect of the restructuring on staff.

For academic and general staff, the extent and seemingly continuous nature of these changes have led to considerable confusion over accountabilities and decision-making processes. The University reports that this was a key theme to have emerged during the course of the self-

assessment. This is considered in some detail in the Performance Portfolio. With the recent appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor staff are cautiously optimistic that this will be the beginning of a period of consolidation and greater stability at the University.

1.2 *Council*

As noted above, a review of Council was undertaken in 1996. The subsequent revision to the Constitution reduced the size of Council from 35 to 20 members, drawn from the University Senate, academic and general staff, students, and external stakeholders as well as ex officio places for the Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor. The Convenor of the Academic Board has a long-standing right to attend and speak at Council meetings.

Since this review and the more recent review of Council committees (see below), Council is undergoing an evolution in the exercise of its governance functions. Some members have recognised that the Council needs to provide greater strategic leadership based on a shared vision that will be developed with the new Vice-Chancellor. Meetings are held less frequently than in the past but are now of longer duration with the amount of discussion and debate on substantive issues increasing.

In terms of Council's role in maintaining oversight of the achievement of University objectives, some Council members commented that it would be beneficial to have a more structured form of reporting, including quantitative indicators, against which performance could be more readily monitored by Council. In particular considerable merit was seen in developing a longitudinal series of quality indicators for teaching and research performance to be provided to Council at least annually, together with a commentary on trends and intended improvement measures. The University has indicated that it is considering establishing a set of formal performance indicators, negotiated and accepted by the University community; and has indicated it will develop, by July 2003, a formal benchmarking framework applicable to institutional and local levels. Initiatives such as these would enable the Council more easily to exercise its important governance role in the quality assurance processes of the University by systematically monitoring performance indicators derived from corporate plans.

Recommendation 1

That, as part of the planned development of a new strategic plan, agreement be reached on the form of reporting and performance indicators that will be regularly submitted to Council for monitoring purposes.

There is generally a clear understanding amongst Council members of the appropriate distinction between the Council's governance role and the role of management. Some members lament the changes that have occurred in the definition of the role and responsibilities of university councils over recent decades and feel that the Council's mandate for more direct superintendence over the educational and administrative affairs of the University should be reinstated. Continued effort to assist Council members in coming to a common understanding of Council's strategic and crucial governance role, as distinct from the management role of the Vice-Chancellor and his senior colleagues, appears desirable.

Council operates largely on a consensus model, with formal voting reserved for statutory requirements. Council conducts an annual review of its effectiveness and the Chancellor undertakes to meet individually with members annually if they wish to do so to discuss Council's operation. A short questionnaire is also distributed to members at the conclusion of each meeting to seek feedback on the conduct of the meeting, the timeliness and helpfulness of papers presented to Council and so on. The Chancellor is supported for initiating review

processes through which Council may improve its operation. With time, the level of review occurring after each meeting may be able to be reduced with greater weight being placed on the annual review.

The University's mission is "to contribute to the wealth and well-being of South Australia, Australia and the international community through education, research and community service of distinction". Specific goals in the Strategic Plan focus on contributing to civic and cultural leadership in the community. The panel considers that Council members could play a much greater role than they do to assist the University in promotion both within the city and across the State more widely and in developing collaborative support for specific education and research initiatives, in conjunction with University managers. Council has recognised this as a need and members appear to share the desire to become more actively involved in the development of mutually beneficial links within Adelaide and South Australia. The panel was informed that Council is currently considering forming a sub-committee on fundraising. The panel strongly supports this initiative but suggests the focus should be not solely on philanthropic contributions but also on other potential beneficial arrangements including collaborative support for specific education and research initiatives.

An area identified by Council as a particular emphasis for community engagement is increasing the University's links with alumni. One of the strategies identified to assist in achieving community service goals is "maintaining mutually supportive relationships with the University's alumni" (see also Chapter 7). The Board of the Alumni Association, chaired by an external member of Council, has placed increased effort in recent years on ensuring that the database of alumni is updated. The Association currently has 18 chapters, five of which are located overseas. The University recognises that with the growing emphasis being placed on the importance of continuing professional development its alumni could become an increasingly valuable source of revenue for the University, in addition to the less tangible support they are able to provide. The panel supports and endorses the University's efforts at increasing its links with alumni.

1.2.1 Council committees

In 1996-1997 Council established a number of committees to advise it or the Vice-Chancellor. The University notes in its Performance Portfolio that "these committees increasingly provided an advisory function more for the Vice-Chancellor than the Council, which came to rely on executive advice to inform its decisions". As mentioned above, a review of Council committees was undertaken in late 2001/early 2002 (the Penington Review), which recommended significant changes to the role and composition of the committees. Council approved a new structure of its committees in April 2002. A notable change is that a member of Council now convenes all Council committees. With the exception of the Academic Board, the majority of members of the committees is from Council.

Academic Board

At the time of the McGregor Review in 1996, the Academic Board did not have a significant role in advising Council on academic matters and had largely ceased to attract academic leaders as active members. This was seen as one of the weaknesses in governance of the University at that time. As a result of the Penington Review, the Academic Board has been repositioned as the principal academic body in the University, with delegated authority to determine policy and practice in education, research and research training, and with formal responsibility for the quality of the University's academic programs. In particular, the new terms of reference of the Board include that it will "assure the quality of teaching and learning within the University by developing appropriate policies, including course accreditation and periodic reviews".

This re-shaping of the Academic Board occurred only recently, with the first meeting of the new Board taking place in June 2002. The new constitution allows for up to 43 members, with ex officio and elected members. Up to 20 members are Heads of School elected by the faculties (up to four per faculty), three members are drawn from the professoriate (elected by the academic staff), and two members of the general staff (at HEO7 or above) are elected by the general staff. Four places are reserved for undergraduate and postgraduate student representatives. Any full time member of the academic staff is able to attend Academic Board meetings and may, with the consent of the Convenor, speak on any matter before the Board.

The University's self-assessment suggested that there is "cautious enthusiasm" from staff about the potential offered by the reshaped Academic Board for greater representation in decision-making. This sentiment was also evident to the panel from its discussions with staff. Some academic staff are not yet aware of their right of attendance at meetings and others suggested that they are not aware of the Board's role or functions. It remains to be seen whether the current composition of Academic Board will provide sufficient University-wide representation and participation. It will be important to monitor this as the Board develops into its role and to review progress after a suitable time (perhaps a year or so). As part of that review a particular consideration should be the extent of involvement of Heads of School in the Board's activities and whether there would be value in all Heads of School becoming ex officio members of the Board.

The panel noted that, to encourage participation of academic staff, the Convenor has determined that Board papers will be provided to all Heads of School. This should assist in raising staff awareness of the activities of the Board provided, of course, that suitable communication mechanisms exist within the schools (the general issue of communication is discussed in section 2.4 of this Report). As the Academic Board becomes more established, the panel expects that it would take on an increasingly strong role in facilitating communication between the senior executive of the University, the heads of academic units and the professoriate.

The recent changes to the Academic Board arose from recognition by the University that its predecessor had become ineffective as the principal academic body within the institution and it is to the University's credit that this recognition has been acted upon. In reclaiming this important role, the new Academic Board will need to strengthen significantly its ability to maintain an oversight of academic activities across the University. In particular, emphasis needs to be placed, as a priority, on ensuring that its mechanisms for assuring the quality of teaching and learning activities are operating effectively across the University. These mechanisms include the development and use of a core set of performance measures to monitor quality of learning and teaching at faculty and school levels; the maintenance of a rolling program of academic course reviews; establishing and monitoring guidelines in relation to assessment; and ensuring the effective implementation of the University's Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Policy. The details of these mechanisms are discussed later in this Report (see Chapter 6).

Another important element in strengthening the Academic Board is a need to clarify the relationship between it and its sub-committees such as the Academic Program Accreditation and Review Panel (APARP; see section 6.3). It was apparent to the panel that some sub-committee members are still unsure of the role of that committee in relation to the Board. Some further work to more precisely define the roles and responsibilities of Board sub-committees is required.

Finally, the Academic Board does not currently have robust links with Faculty Boards. Given that the Faculty Boards have also undergone some recent re-constitution of their own (see below), it is probably too early to expect strong linkages to have developed. However, the

establishment and ongoing maintenance of such links will be important foundations for the effective functioning of the Academic Board.

Recommendation 2

That the Academic Board strengthen its ability to maintain an oversight of the academic activities of the University and, in particular, assure the quality of teaching and learning activities. Particular attention to relationships between the Academic Board and its sub-committees and the Faculty Boards is required.

Faculty Boards

The Penington Review noted that Faculty Boards did not appear to be functioning effectively with their roles being largely subsumed by the Executive Deans, and that this was narrowing opportunities for interaction between internal and external groups with an interest in the University.

Academic Board reconstituted the terms of reference of Faculty Boards in mid-2002. Each Faculty Board has a membership of up to 23 persons. Each Board is convened by the relevant Executive Dean, with the Vice-Chancellor and Convenor of Academic Board also ex officio members, and includes up to 20 members of the full-time staff of that faculty (at least three quarters of whom must be full-time members of the academic staff). The total must also include at least one undergraduate student and one postgraduate student enrolled in an academic program offered by the faculty.

This review has commenced a revitalisation of the Faculty Boards, although some academic staff still seem unaware of the place and role of the Faculty Boards in the structure of the University. Presumably awareness of their role will increase as their operation becomes more firmly established.

Terms of reference for the Faculty Boards include “to contribute to the strategic and operational plans of the University by advising Council, through the Academic Board, on the mission of each faculty and school, the relationship of faculty strategic plans to the strategic plan of the University, and the means by which quality is to be monitored”. The Faculty Boards have an important role to play in ensuring that University policies for teaching and learning, research, and research training are being implemented effectively across the faculty and that University-level objectives contained in plans such as the Learning and Teaching Plan are operationalised. Now that the Faculty Board structure has been reviewed, it is necessary to ensure that greater attention be given to their role in assuring academic quality and standards within the faculty and accounting for this to the Academic Board. As noted above, stronger links between the Faculty Boards and the Academic Board also need to be developed.

Recommendation 3

That the recently reconstituted Faculty Boards develop, as a priority, effective mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of University policy within faculties and for assuring, in conjunction with the Academic Board, academic quality and standards.

1.3 Faculty and School Leadership

The University's mission highlights the importance of effective and efficient management and administration to support the attainment of its education, research and community service objectives.

1.3.1 Executive Deans

Executive Deans are the academic leaders of each faculty. As noted above, they report to the DVC E&P. Recent changes have expanded the role of the Executive Deans. They are now members of the Vice-Chancellor's Committee (VCC), which has assumed the more strategic responsibilities that had previously been the responsibility of the University Planning Committee (see section 1.4), and are more actively involved with the budget process. The Executive Deans are generally satisfied that they have sufficient delegated authority to discharge their responsibilities although some did have concerns about their influence over resource allocation and saw potential for ambiguity in relation to their role in overseeing research. Their membership of the VCC is seen by the Executive Deans as important in terms of ensuring they have direct access to the Vice-Chancellor and exposure to University-wide issues.

A Committee of Executive Deans was established in January 2001 as a focus for a co-ordinated approach to common issues in faculty management, including strategic planning, resource management, staffing and related issues, curriculum development and rationalisation, and quality assurance. Faculty-level planning has, in particular, been recognised as an area needing further development and a more consistent approach.

Although "delivery of responsive quality assurance processes and outcomes which promote a culture of continuous improvement" is formally in the Executive Deans' position description, the panel formed the view that the Executive Deans do not consider themselves to have a significant role in relation to academic quality assurance and that they rather view this to rest with the Heads of School and the Academic Board. Nonetheless, the Executive Deans form a crucial link between senior management, the schools and staff, and their roles in the evolution of management structures, in setting and monitoring performance against faculty planning priorities and in budget formulation and accountability all have a direct impact on the relative significance being attached to quality assurance within their faculties. These dimensions of their responsibilities will need careful monitoring. Under the revised structure Executive Deans will also play a vital role in ensuring faculty and school perspectives are reflected in University-level planning and priority setting. In turn, Executive Deans have responsibility for ensuring that the University perspective is communicated and appreciated by academic and general staff. Further, in conjunction with the enlivened Faculty Boards, they are largely responsible for ensuring that University-level plans are effectively implemented.

These are core responsibilities, particularly given the extent of change that has taken place in recent years. From its discussion with the current incumbents the panel considers Executive Deans understand and are well-equipped and supported to carry out these tasks. The panel suggests that an explicit review of the role of the Executive Deans and their relation to Heads of School may be beneficial once the school structure has had more time to become established. Identifying the ways in which the particular training and support needs of the Executive Deans can best be met will be a matter requiring ongoing attention.

1.3.2 Heads of School

Multi-disciplinary schools are to become the basic sub-faculty organisational unit. At the time of the panel's visit, some schools had already been formed and it was anticipated that

schools will be in place across the University by January 2003. Although departments remain extant in some parts of the University, this Report for brevity will use the term school to refer to sub-faculty academic units.

The process for identifying a Head of School has traditionally been based on an election amongst staff of the school and the Performance Portfolio suggests that the status of Heads of School is an issue of management structure that still requires resolution. It notes that Heads of School remain elected positions rather than being selected against criteria and that this “tends to undermine the line-management processes in relation to quality management within faculties”.

There is an apparent discrepancy between the expectations of the role of the Head of School by senior managers, by staff and by Heads themselves. Senior managers consider the Heads of School as part of the line management structure of the University, whereas staff in schools see the Head as their representative who should act as an advocate for the interests of the school. This can lead to tensions for the Head in trying to respond to what are, at times, conflicting pressures. Senior managers expect the Heads to be the conduit for information dissemination about policy development, whereas some Heads consider it their role to protect staff from such intrusions so that they may concentrate on their teaching and research.

Expectations of the role of Head of School need to be more precisely clarified. The generic statement of roles and responsibilities that existed for the former Heads of Department is currently being reshaped into a new statement for Heads of School. The panel supports this work which should assist in establishing a common understanding of the role. However, without additional action this initiative will be insufficient in achieving the required level of change.

At present, the position of Head of School does not appear to be an attractive appointment for senior academic staff and is often regarded by those undertaking it as an unwelcome interruption to their career. To ensure that the management of activities at school-level is effective and efficient (as noted in the mission statement, see above) and as a means of identifying staff with an active interest in the role, consideration should be given to amending the method of selection of Heads of School.

Furthermore, to strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership of Heads of School, consideration should be given to ensuring that their contributions are adequately recognised and rewarded.

Recommendation 4

That a mechanism be developed to ensure that the most suitably qualified candidates are appointed to the positions of Head of School, following appropriate consultation with staff within the schools.

Professional development for Heads of School is an important element in ensuring these staff are sufficiently supported in carrying out their increasingly complex roles. The current Leadership Development Program includes courses on a variety of topics that have been useful to some incumbent Heads. However, others feel that the main benefit from attendance is the opportunity to meet other colleagues rather than the actual content of the course. To date, attendance at the Program has been optional, although in some faculties attendance has been expected.

The Heads of School and Managers of Administrative Units have established an informal network, convened by several people from within the group. The University had provided some administrative and financial support for the group's activities but the agenda is driven

from within the group itself. These meetings have been found to be an extremely useful forum to discuss issues of common interest. From time to time, invitations are extended to senior managers to address the group (for instance, the new Vice-Chancellor attended a recent meeting). As part of the suggested review of the formal Leadership Development Program, consideration should be given to the ways in which the University can encourage and support this informal network.

Recommendation 5

That improvement be made in recognising and rewarding the contributions of Heads of School so that they become attractive positions and that a suitable career structure for Heads of School be established. Furthermore, the training, development and support needs of Heads of Schools should be explicitly considered, including a review of how the Leadership Development Program meets their particular needs.

1.4 Strategic Planning

A revised Strategic Plan for 2001-2005 was approved by Council in November 2001. The Strategic Plan is brief and does not purport to detail the operational priorities necessary to achieve identified strategies. Nor does it appear to have provided an effective framework for faculty and school planning. The formulation of a new long-term vision and strategic plan has been identified by Council as a priority for the Vice-Chancellor.

The University's self-assessment identified a number of limitations to the approach that has been taken to planning in the past including highly ambitious targets, poorly aligned resource allocations and insufficient integration between University, faculty, school and special purpose plans. A number of activities have been foreshadowed or are underway to address these issues.

The University Planning Committee which formerly had responsibility for overseeing strategic planning has been disbanded with University-level planning now to be a function of the VCC. This will allow for greater involvement of the Executive Deans, an arrangement which has the potential to facilitate greater consistency between University and faculty plans.

The Office of Planning and Development has been established to support this activity. The Performance Portfolio signals the intention to develop a new planning framework, to replace that developed in 1999, that "ensures consistency and transparency of process across the University and ownership by staff". This is supported by the panel.

The panel noted that markedly different perceptions are held by Council, senior management and staff within the faculties and schools regarding the planning and budgeting processes within the University. Council believes there are considerable opportunities for bottom-up input whereas most academic staff believe Council and senior management impose plans and budgets on the academic units with minimal consultation. The University has recognised, and the panel endorses, the importance of balancing 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' planning within the framework.

Once the planning framework has been developed, the challenge to the University will be to ensure that it is communicated effectively and implemented and that consistent cycles for planning, review and reporting against objectives are established at every level. While in the past some effort has been devoted to planning, the University did not have any systematic reporting of progress against approved plans.

Recommendation 6

That current planning initiatives be given high priority with a view to an early adoption of a more systematic approach that seeks to integrate strategic and operational planning at University, faculty, school and divisional levels and that provides for a rigorous process of reporting on, and monitoring, performance against plans.

1.4.1 Resource allocation and strategic objectives

One of the goals in the Strategic Plan 2001-2005 is to establish “a long-term financial strategy that is transparent and underpins sustainable development of the University’s core businesses”. The panel strongly endorses the need for the development of such a strategy.

The University is operating under severe financial constraints at present and has embarked on reductions in expenditure in a number of areas to address its budget deficit. This has included staff reductions, the introduction of annual bids for new staffing positions and constraints on support available for staff development and promotion (see also section 1.1). Reviews of central services have also been instigated to identify and eliminate unnecessary duplication. The quality of reporting to Finance Committee has improved over recent months and is now regarded as being appropriate for the Committee’s requirements.

The University’s self-assessment and the panel’s discussions with staff have identified the dissatisfaction felt by many staff with the lack of clarity in the budget process, at both central and school levels. In recent months considerable effort has been directed at making the budget process more transparent. The 2002 budget uses a relative funding model to allocate resources which, while less opaque than the central allocation approach used previously, is seen by some as too ‘mechanistic’ and still requiring increased flexibility. This is particularly the case in those areas with relatively heavy undergraduate student demand (see section 6.1). The panel has been informed that changes to the budget model for 2003 will assist in rectifying this problem.

The Executive Director (Finance and Infrastructure) has been proactive in assisting faculties to understand the new budget model and these efforts have been greatly appreciated. It is intended that, by the end of the current year, a triennial budgeting process will have been implemented which will facilitate forward planning. Now that budgeting has become a responsibility of the VCC, Executive Deans are more closely involved in the process (see section 1.3.1) and this is seen by all parties to be a positive step. Heads of School also report generally good interaction with their respective Executive Dean. Nonetheless, the establishment of further mechanisms to ensure increased levels of communication of budget outcomes and their rationale is required.

As the reform of the budget process progresses, the panel considers that some increased devolution of budgetary responsibility and accountability to Executive Deans and Heads of School would be beneficial to the University in achieving desired outcomes in terms of increasing the flexibility and responsiveness with which faculties and schools could act.

The panel encourages the University to continue its program of reform of the budget process.

Recommendation 7

That, as part of the University’s current budget reform process, mechanisms be established to ensure increased levels of communication of budget outcomes and their rationale; and that the development and implementation of a staged devolution strategy that affords greater

budgetary responsibility and accountability to Executive Deans and Heads of School be considered.

The University has signalled its wish to place emphasis in future budget strategy on revenue growth as well as cost-cutting; for instance, through significant increases in international student enrolments.

1.5 Quality Management

1.5.1 Quality framework

The DVC E&P has overall responsibility for quality assurance at the University and for the implementation of the quality framework approved by the VCC in April 2001. Operational co-ordination of activities is the responsibility of the Director, Quality Assurance, a position established in 2000.

The Quality Improvement Board (QIB) was formed in 2001 as a reference group to advise the DVC E&P on matters related to quality assurance and improvement. It consists of senior managers from faculties and divisions as well as one student member. It has proved to be a useful forum for discussion. In the past year, much of the QIB's attention has been occupied in co-ordination of the self-assessment exercise undertaken in advance of the audit.

The quality framework does not as yet appear to be having a tangible impact in the faculties and divisions of the University and there is a need for more coherent integration and implementation of quality assurance systems across the institution. Historically, inadequate attention has been paid to reporting against and monitoring plans and reviews, and to ensuring the systematic use of feedback from various sources for improvement. For instance, the previous system of reviews of academic areas did not require the area undergoing the review to report subsequently on the actions taken as a result. The revised framework for these reviews now includes a follow-up mechanism. The amount and pace of structural change and the relatively recent change in many of the senior management positions have not assisted in creating an environment conducive to the creation of effective and systematic monitoring processes.

The new Office of Planning and Development has the potential to serve as a focus for co-ordination of a more systematic continuous improvement cycle. For instance, the Office has recently appointed a Surveys Officer who intends to develop a surveys framework for the co-ordination, analysis and dissemination of survey outcomes.

The extensive self-assessment undertaken in preparation for the audit led to the identification in the Performance Portfolio of approximately 50 planned improvements, each with a target date for completion (the majority are signaled for completion by no later than December 2003). The planned improvements are concise statements of intended action relating to the full range of the University's activities.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends the University for the thorough and open manner of the self-assessment undertaken prior to the audit and for the development of specific strategies intended to address those areas identified as requiring improvement.

The panel endorses a large number of the planned improvements noted in the Performance Portfolio, only some of which are specifically referred to or elaborated upon in this Report.

However, it was concerned that, with a relatively large number of planned actions, there is a potential for a clear focus on the intentions to become lost.

The scale of the planned improvements is variable - some are associated with a discrete area of the University, while others are larger in scale and will require significant University-wide co-ordination if they are to be achieved successfully. Given that the planned improvements will need to be accommodated alongside existing demands, further prioritisation (beyond the indicative timings) is warranted. This prioritisation needs to be determined after a careful assessment of the priorities within the total quality framework and following consultation with faculties and divisions.

Recommendation 8

That further prioritisation of the planned improvements identified in the University's self-assessment take place based on an assessment of the relative priorities of these within the context of the total quality framework and after consultation with faculties and divisions; and that, once priorities are agreed, the achievement of the planned improvements is actively monitored.

1.5.2 Measuring outcomes

The Performance Portfolio states that the establishment of a set of institutional performance indicators, negotiated and accepted by the University community, is under consideration. The panel understands that some work has been undertaken to advance this project, but progress has been slow. Indeed, the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, reporting in 1995, noted "the [review] team was advised of work being done ... to develop a range of performance indicators". Some faculties and schools have established performance indicators, without much in the way of central co-ordination. The University has recognised that greater consistency would be desirable.

The University has identified through its self-assessment that comparisons of performance with other institutions, on a disciplinary or functional level, have been rare and has indicated that a formal benchmarking framework applicable to both institutional and local levels will be developed, with appropriate resources allocated to encourage its implementation. The panel strongly supports and encourages this work. The absence of such measures is a major weakness in the University's quality assurance framework. The development and implementation of a coherent set of initiatives to monitor the University's teaching and learning outcomes and academic standards and its research and research training performance against appropriate international and national benchmarks are important for the University to be able to determine progress towards the achievement of its objectives. In particular, initiatives might include benchmarking the standards of the University's final year undergraduate assessment; graduate outcomes and satisfaction; use of international examiners for doctoral theses and so on; and benchmarking its research performance against that of similar overseas universities.

A discussion of specific outcomes with respect to learning and teaching, research and research training and community service is included later in this Report.

Recommendation 9

That priority be given to the development of a formal benchmarking framework, through which the University will be able to assess more accurately the achievement of its core objectives. Such a framework was under consideration by the University at the time of the audit.

1.6 *Information Management Systems*

The University's information technology (IT) strategy is developed by the General Manager, Information Technology Services (ITS), in consultation with the IT Facilitation Committee, which includes the Associate Deans from each faculty with responsibility for IT development. The Executive Steering Committee for IT Strategic Direction maintains oversight of the strategy and involves senior managers and representatives from some faculties.

In 1999, the University took the decision to replace its existing business applications with a new system using PeopleSoft applications. Human resources, finance and student administration systems were rolled-out simultaneously. At the time of the panel's visit, most of the financial modules had been implemented and elements of the other two systems were in place. Two further, separate systems, ResearchMaster and SyllabusPlus, were also being implemented.

The University's self-assessment highlighted the difficulties associated with the implementation of these systems and the dissatisfaction amongst staff that these difficulties have generated. The Performance Portfolio notes that "failure to systematise business practices before implementing the management systems has led to the widespread view amongst staff that the software, rather than the need for flexible and efficient processes, is dictating the agenda for change".

The panel acknowledges the complexity of introducing simultaneously a large, complex suite of administrative systems. ITS appear to have managed the technical complexity of the systems successfully but the overall implementation (including the modification of business processes and workflow, as suggested by the University) has been fragmented. The extent of senior University "buy in" – particularly at faculty and school levels – has been limited. This in turn has compromised the University's ability to leverage business improvement from the significant investment the new suite of systems represents.

The University now realises that a "post-implementation business plan" is required to enhance the functionality of, and increase benefits to be derived from, its new management information systems. The panel encourages the development of such a plan. In managing the ongoing implementation of the new management systems, the panel considers there is a need to engender a more cohesive, inclusive approach, which will involve leadership at all levels and generate a sense of ownership throughout the University. The plan will also need to include a wider consideration of the governance, project management and change management elements of implementing new information systems to ensure that more rigorous business planning for all components occurs in a timely fashion; that key clients (such as the faculties) are involved in administrative systems governance and project management; and that formal reporting and accountability processes for reporting performance against the project plan are well established.

Recommendation 10

That the University's proposed post-implementation business planning being undertaken to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the new management information systems be given the highest priority by senior management and that, in undertaking that planning, the wider issues of governance, project management and change management associated with implementing the new administrative systems are taken into account.

2. STAFF

2.1 Objectives

A number of the objectives in the Strategic Plan 2001-2005 relate indirectly to staff matters. Some of the more direct staff-related objectives include “establishing and implementing best practice policies in staff recruitment, staff development, performance review and promotion”, “further developing leadership skills across the University” and “facilitating a culture of clear communication and effective consultation”.

Progress being made toward these objectives is discussed below. In general terms, the panel found no evidence that the University’s staffing practices have been externally measured against “best practice” benchmarks. This is another area for consideration in the planned development of an appropriate benchmarking framework for the University (section 1.5.2).

2.2 Induction

A voluntary, centrally co-ordinated induction program for new staff was previously held approximately four times per year. This is no longer run as attendance had dwindled to a number not considered to be viable. In response to the assumed lack of interest from staff, emphasis is now being placed on the development of an on-line induction program, in the hope that this will encourage greater participation. In addition, it is expected that individual organisational units will develop their own specific induction programs.

The induction program for new staff could be regarded as a key mechanism for achieving the objective of “facilitating a culture of clear communication and effective consultation”. It can be used as a tool by the University to ensure that new staff understand the University’s structure and their place within it, learn about the University’s strategic priorities and are informed about their opportunities for involvement in local and central decision-making. Consideration of the underlying goals of the induction program with respect to these broader organisational goals would assist in identifying the most appropriate form and content of the induction program, and determining whether attendance should remain voluntary or, as is likely, is sufficiently important that it should be mandated.

Recommendation 11

That the goals of the induction program for new staff be considered in the light of the University’s overall staffing objectives and that, once these are determined, a suitable program be implemented.

An on-line Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) program has also been developed. Approximately 450 staff and 200 managers had completed the program as at the end of August 2002. Given the need for the University to meet its statutory requirements with respect to OH&S there will be an ongoing need to monitor the uptake and effectiveness of the program.

2.3 *Staff Development*

2.3.1 *Scope*

Academic staff development opportunities revolve around attendance at conferences and the special studies program. For general staff, there is a range of internally-provided courses on offer and the staff met by the panel felt encouraged and supported by their supervisor or Head of School to attend such courses. However, within the current budget constraints, some staff are unwilling to seek out professional development opportunities since the costs must be met by their school. University staff (both academic and general staff) account for 30 per cent of the enrolments for the courses offered by Professional and Continuing Education.

As part of its self-assessment, the University has identified the need to map the inter-related training and development systems and structures within the University and link these to University objectives. The panel supports this. This work will be overseen by the University Staff Development Committee, which had been established just prior to the panel's visit. At present, faculties and divisions are required to set aside 0.75 per cent of their annual budget for staff development. Methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the various strategies employed across the University are to be discussed by VCC. In keeping with the objective of establishing and implementing best practice staffing policies (see section 2.1), an investigation at this stage of the systems in place in other universities would be worthwhile.

Recommendation 12

That, in developing improved staff training and development systems, the University examine such systems within comparable Australian universities and that suitable means be established for assessing how effectively the University's systems operate, in terms of both staff participation and achieving stated development outcomes.

The Leadership Development Program includes modules on a wide range of topics including strategic leadership and change, budget and financial management, and recruiting staff. Approximately 255 staff have attended at least one course in the program during 2001 and 2002. Some modules have not attracted any participants in this time. Mention has already been made of the Leadership Development Program with respect to the particular needs of Heads of School (see section 1.3.2).

Some general staff would appreciate the development opportunity provided by short-term job exchange or secondment to other areas within the University.

In terms of staff progression and promotions, the promotions policy for academic staff has recently been revised. The system is viewed as being transparent and fair, although feedback to those who were unsuccessful was uneven and could be more rigorously monitored. As noted earlier, the panel was advised that, due to budget constraints in 2002 the University decided to offer a promotions round up to level B positions only. There is some evidence that this may have resulted in some of the higher calibre staff seeking opportunities elsewhere. The panel was informed at the time of its visit that the matter of the 2002 promotions round was under consideration by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Subsequent to the panel's visit, the Commission ruled that the NTEU and the University be given 15 days to agree on how higher promotion rounds for 2002 and 2003 might be "merged with some recognition of the 2003 and 2004 payment obligations". Where agreement could not be reached the Commission ruled that the University "belatedly commence a promotions round for 2002". For general staff, progression is achieved by applying for positions within the University.

2.3.2 *Career Development Review Pilot*

The current pilot of the Career Development Review process replaces the former Review Planning Process, which was established in 1997. Seventeen organisational units volunteered to pilot the new process, which will run through to the end of 2002. The panel saw this initiative as a key requirement if the Strategic Plan objectives relating to staff performance and leadership development are to be met.

Detailed proformas have been developed to assist staff to plan their work goals, and then to undertake each stage in a three-step process (developing a work plan, monitoring progress and acknowledging outcomes). The pilot project is an encouraging initiative but could well need simplification with a greater focus placed on individual staff member's performance and the impediments to performance improvement. Undoubtedly the evaluation of the pilot will provide a more comprehensive feedback than the audit panel was able to obtain but there is a concern that the process at present is too long and focused excessively on training needs, a particular concern as this might raise expectations that may not be able to be met in the current budgetary environment.

Many staff met by the panel indicated a desire for the opportunity to discuss their performance with their supervisor annually, and for a means of identifying their work priorities in relation to their unit's and the University's objectives. From its discussions, the panel concluded that such opportunities were occurring neither regularly nor systematically.

Given the University's objective of "establishing and implementing best practice policies in staff recruitment, staff development, performance review and promotion", the panel strongly endorses the need for a performance-based career development process. Once the pilot of the Career Development Review process is concluded and the evaluation of it completed, the priority will be on ensuring that the agreed process is implemented across the University and that its effectiveness is monitored. In this respect, Heads of School will play a significant role. Through its relevant committee, Council might assume responsibility for monitoring progress in achieving this objective.

Agreement will be required with staff associations for the full implementation of the system. Support for the University's desire for an effective system for considering staff performance would seem to be much more likely if the system also allows for the identification of impediments to performance.

Recommendation 13

That the University continue its progress towards an effective process of annual staff reviews which is linked to both performance and development outcomes. Once approved, this initiative should be implemented throughout the whole University, applying equally to academic and general staff and with primary responsibility for its implementation resting with the Head of School (or equivalent).

2.4 *Communication*

Issues of communication and the dissemination of information were consistent themes espoused by staff in the University's self-assessment in advance of the audit. Particular areas of concern were a limited awareness of significant structural changes, the lack of accessible repositories of data and policy documents and insufficient clarity over decision-making pathways. A planned improvement identified by the University is to develop a University-wide Quality Manual that ensures consistent and accurate information on University policies

and procedures. The University has also recognised that there is a need to develop formal and clear delegations from Council to managers and committees and to define, develop and document decision-making pathways. The panel endorses these intentions.

One of the other concerns of staff relates to their difficulty in understanding the budget processes. Changes have already been instituted for the current year's budget in an attempt to rectify some of these problems and have already been discussed (see section 1.4.1).

To assist in addressing these communication-related issues, the University has identified the need for the development of a communication strategy and has formed a Communications Committee to explore how internal communications can be better managed. Comprised of senior management, the Committee has been charged with developing a communication strategy by December 2002. Progress to date has been slow - the Committee has met just once (in June) and at the time of the panel's visit was yet to develop formal terms of reference. Indeed its activities were in abeyance pending resolution of restructuring of the functions of media and strategic communications. As part of this restructuring, consideration is being given to the appointment of a Manager of Strategic Communications.

Recommendation 14

That work proceed without delay on the development of a University-wide communication strategy that provides staff with substantive opportunities to provide feedback; and that, if it is to have a continuing role, the operations of the Communications Committee, particularly its contribution to supporting achievement of the strategy, be confirmed and progressed without further delay.

It will be important to ensure that academic and general staff are adequately involved in the strategy's development. The complex and multi-layered nature of a university makes it necessary to constantly attend to and monitor the effectiveness of various mechanisms for communicating with internal and external stakeholders. The development of an agreed strategy for communications should not be seen as an end-point in itself.

A number of mechanisms for 'top-down' communication, from senior management to staff and students, is already in place. The University's self-assessment has identified that the internal electronic newsletter, 'Inside Adelaide', is too unwieldy and detailed to perform a meaningful communication role. Other top-down methods include minutes from Council and Academic Board meetings. The panel was concerned about several passing references by staff to the reliance they placed on informal sources of information about important University decisions – the notes circulated by an elected staff member to Council following Council meetings and outside sources such as local newspapers being cited as examples. Senior management has a challenge to supplant these sources with a timely, comprehensive, accurate, balanced internal communication system to all staff. The Vice-Chancellor has recently instigated a regular brief email to all staff on current issues. Several staff commented on this favourably and it is seen as a good start towards addressing the acknowledged problem and meeting the Strategic Plan's communication objectives.

Academic staff, in particular, appear to feel alienated and frustrated by what they perceive to be the absence of opportunities to become meaningfully involved in policy development. General staff feel an inadequate level of consultation on business decisions of direct relevance to their own responsibilities. An obvious area for the communication strategy to address is the means for increasing genuine opportunities for staff participation. The roles of the Academic Board and Faculty Boards in providing for staff involvement are important.

The majority of academic and general staff rely on their Head of School and the school's internal communication systems to learn about current University activities and policy development. This system is effective to varying degrees across the schools. The need to clarify the expectations of Heads of School and to increase the support of them in their role is discussed above (see section 1.3.2).

Some Executive Deans have taken an active role in obtaining feedback from, and providing counseling to, academic staff. This approach, particularly where one-on-one meetings with all academic staff in the faculty have been held, is highly regarded by the staff involved. The panel recognises that individual meetings are a major commitment but believes the effort would be well worthwhile, especially for new staff and those with particular support needs.

Despite the general concern about communication issues, the commitment and loyalty of the staff to the University were evident to the panel, as was their pride in the University's achievements to date. The panel noted positively the emphasis being placed by both the representatives of staff associations and the University management on a willingness to strengthen mutual trust and confidence in their relationship. With the considerable goodwill that already exists, the measures already underway and the intended actions identified in the self-assessment, the panel has considerable confidence that the communication and morale problems outlined in the Performance Portfolio can be properly addressed.

3. STUDENTS

The University has an overarching objective to provide “efficient student services in a friendly and culturally sensitive manner that reflects and supports the diversity of student needs and concerns” (Strategic Plan 2001-2005).

The panel explored a number of different aspects of the University’s support of and relations with students.

3.1 *Support for On-Shore International Students*

In 2001, international students accounted for 12.5 per cent of the University’s total student load (1,499 EFTSU). Of this number, 1,039 are enrolled in undergraduate programs, 153 are higher degree by research students and 237 are undertaking postgraduate coursework.

The International Student Centre (ISC) is highly regarded by the international students met by the panel. The Centre provides a ‘one-stop-shop’ service to all international students and offers a mix of academic and social support services. The ‘Settling in Successfully’ program provides a helpful orientation for recently arrived students, and the ‘Returning Home’ program addresses the issues that may be faced by students as they leave the University and adapt again to life at home. The program appears somewhat fragmented for some arriving in the mid-year intake but is generally much appreciated by students.

The ISC undertakes an annual review of all international students who have failed more than two courses and are deemed to be ‘at risk’ of academic failure. These students are invited to attend an interview with a counselor. Some faculties also have staff in place to offer specialised academic support for international students.

The Integrated Bridging Program (IBP) is a compulsory element of the Structured Program (see section 5.4) for all international students for whom English is a second language. Following a review of the Structured Program in late 2001, international students undertaking a research proposal and literature review in the IBP are no longer required to repeat this as part of the Structured Program and this has improved the IBP. The IBP was short-listed for the Australian Award for University Teaching in 1999.

As part of the IBP, joint student/supervisor workshops are offered. They are designed to enhance communication between supervisors and commencing international higher degree by research (HDR) students. Since 1997, an average of approximately 45 supervisors have attended the workshops annually. Feedback from participants is positive. The University has identified as a planned improvement, to take place immediately, the need to embed cultural awareness training in staff induction and career development programs and actively promote this training for current staff. Given this objective, consideration could be given to mandating attendance at the IBP student/supervisor workshop for supervisors inexperienced in the supervision of international students.

A problem raised with the panel was that at recruitment some international students felt that they had been promised free and unlimited internet access, a particularly attractive enticement not only for academic reasons but to allow them to maintain contact with their families on a cost effective basis. The panel was unable to determine with certainty how this perception had been formed. University policy is that international students (like undergraduate domestic students) are provided with free, unlimited email services through their personalised University email address; free, unlimited access to the on-line resources of the three South

Australian Universities; and a quota for free access to external internet resources sufficient to meet their course needs. International students are also provided with an additional internet quota to allow those students the opportunity to keep abreast more easily of events at home. Although the panel met only a small number of students who had formed this view, this may signal there is a need for the University to be more explicit in its communications with intending international students.

3.2 *Student Support and Administrative Services*

The University has identified in its Performance Portfolio the need to develop strategies for the ongoing reform to student support and administrative services and notes that “a process of ongoing review is inevitable as resources are stretched further and the continuing deployment of new information systems creates new opportunities for improvements”. A comprehensive internal review of the 2002 enrolment process is an example of one such review. This review clearly identifies issues for action and gives accountabilities and timelines. The review group states that “given the poor track-record of implementing recommendations from previous reviews, it is critical that appropriate delegations, structures and processes be established to ensure that all decisions on improvements for the future be translated into actions within the recommended timeframes”. This approach is endorsed by the panel.

The panel heard several instances of students who were wishing to take courses across two or more faculties experiencing difficulty with timetabling. Obviously not all potential course combinations will be able to be catered for. A University-wide timetabling system (using the Syllabus Plus software) was being implemented at the time of the panel’s visit and may facilitate greater flexibility in student course choice.

Some international students feel they have been disadvantaged by a decision to withdraw an elective course offering from a particular semester (due to low enrolment) when they had been originally advised that it would be offered. In some cases, elective courses will not run if class sizes are unacceptably small and there will be insufficient peer interaction. This can be very disappointing for students. The University recognises that core courses must be offered to all both domestic and international students to progress through degree programs. Some students feel that the summer semester also provides insufficient flexibility to allow international students to complete their programs quickly so that they may return home.

Recommendation 15

That the University ensure that it is made clear to students during course advising that elective courses may need to be cancelled depending on student enrolment numbers and what assistance will be provided to students in this circumstance.

3.3 *Communication with Students and Student Involvement in Decision-Making*

Students are represented on Council, Academic Board and its sub-committees and at Faculty Board-level. The panel formed the view that student representation on these bodies is effective, although it received mixed impressions from students on the matter with some students feeling it was tokenistic and others feeling generally satisfied with their ability to have input into decision-making. The Postgraduate Student Association has two nominees on Academic Board. The Overseas Student Association does not have any ex officio representation on either Academic Board or Council.

Following a recommendation from the Penington Review, a Student Affairs Committee has been formed to advise the Vice-Chancellor on student matters. This replaces the former Student Affairs Committee that was a committee of Council. It will meet approximately four times per year and is to be chaired by a student member of Council. In many other universities such a committee reports directly to Council as a means of ensuring that a broader range of student views can be aired than those otherwise represented on Council. A middle course position that the University may wish to consider is for reports of the newly formed Student Affairs Committee to be submitted to Council.

The induction for student representatives on Council is a comprehensive and helpful process involving meetings with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary. The induction process includes the opportunity to observe at one Council meeting prior to commencing the formal term of appointment. This practice is supported.

4. RESEARCH

The University of Adelaide has an impressive, benchmarked, national and international research reputation and a strong research culture. Staff are protective of this reputation and regret that recent budget cuts may negatively effect this tradition. The University recognises that the maintenance of graduate numbers, staff incentives and external funding levels are matters of urgency and is taking steps to retain and strengthen the research culture and to remain competitive.

4.1 *Research Objectives*

The University's core research objectives are:

- “ to address big research questions by encouraging the conduct of research of the highest quality, developing and supporting sufficient critical mass in areas of research strength and building alliances with national and international institutions, industry groups and companies;
- to provide for the long-term sustainability of our research and education programs by broadening the research-funding base to include a range of national and international funding agencies and long term partnerships with industry, as well as through the exploitation of intellectual property;
- to provide postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers with educational and professional development opportunities which will enable them to undertake high quality research and prepare them for leadership roles in their chosen professions, thereby meeting the expectations of their future employers; and
- to communicate the outcomes and benefits of University research effectively to the wider community, both nationally and internationally.”

These will be addressed in this chapter and the following chapter of this Report.

4.2 *Research Management*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVC R) is responsible for oversight of the University research and research training activities. She has oversight of the distribution of research block grant funding. A significant proportion of research block grant funds is distributed with regard to the research plans and priorities of the faculties. Expenditure of the DVC R's discretionary IGS funds is negotiated with each faculty on the basis of mutually agreed Faculty Research Plans. Allocation of research funds within faculties is at the discretion of Executive Deans.

The University Research Committee (URC), recently re-established as a committee of Academic Board, has cross-University representation (the Associate Deans (Research) from each faculty are members). The URC regards its primary roles as the co-ordination of research effort and information sharing, rather than strategic policy setting although its terms of reference include “addressing and making recommendations relating to the development or amendment of University research policy”.

The Research and Research Training Management Report 2002 identifies ten fields of research strength; namely: agriculture, veterinary and environmental sciences; biological sciences; chemical sciences; earth sciences; engineering and technology; information, computing and communication; mathematics; medical and health sciences; physical sciences and studies in human society. Two further fields of emerging or potential strength are identified as behavioural and cognitive sciences, and economics.

The strengths and emerging strengths are defined more by activity measures than strategic objectives. The challenge for the URC, therefore, is to be able to monitor and assess the quality and quantity of research output and to then use this information in future strategic decision-making.

The panel formed the view that URC could play a more active role in guiding the development of research strategy, in acting as a link between the management levels of the University and the faculties, and in monitoring the achievement of University-wide research objectives.

Each faculty has a Research Committee, convened by its Associate Dean (Research). Faculty Research Committees are responsible for allocating some research resources within the faculty. The models used vary, but faculties are generally increasing the transparency of research budget allocations. Some schools have also established their own research committees.

4.3 *Research Centres and Interdisciplinary Research*

The University is involved in a relatively high number of research centres, which is assisting in the achievement of its objective to build critical mass and alliances with national and international institutions, industry groups and companies. It hosts a number of national research centres that are funded by the Commonwealth Government and research organisations, is a partner in 15 Co-operative Research Centres (CRC) and has established approximately 15 University-designated research centres. The University-designated centres have permeable boundaries that allow for a significant amount of cross-disciplinary research.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends the University for the establishment of a number of research centres which are greatly assisting in the achievement of its objective of building critical mass and alliances with national and international institutions, industry groups and companies.

University policy on the establishment of research groupings reserves the titles ‘research centre’, ‘research group’ and ‘research unit’ for groups of staff who have sought approval from the DVC R. Research centres are formally approved by the Vice-Chancellor, on recommendation of DVC R (and following consultation with the URC). They may operate entirely within one faculty or involve other faculties and organisations.

Centres are formally established with a Director, appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, who has responsibility for the oversight and management of the centre’s activities. They are also expected to have an advisory board or committee which must include members external to the University. Some advisory boards are not currently adding a great deal to the operation of the centre, others are virtually non-existent. Where they work they provide valuable, up-to-date advice on industry/constituency issues and can assist in fundraising. In one centre, industry reference groups are formed to support each project, which has been found to be a more beneficial approach.

Recommendation 16

That, in the establishment of a research centre and in its annual reporting and review, greater attention be given to the role of Advisory Boards, particularly with respect to the validation of research programs and accessing sources of research funding.

In the instance where it can be demonstrated that an Advisory Board is inappropriate, it would be preferable to abolish it rather than leave it inactive and unwanted.

Establishment of a centre is normally for an initial five-year term, following which a formal external review is commissioned. Annual reports are submitted to the DVC R and the URC. This was seen as appropriate and helpful by the centres.

Higher degree students working within research centres are generally very enthusiastic about their association with the group and highly value the opportunities it affords them.

Some centre directors would like to commit to performance agreements between their centre and the University which make the mutual expectations more explicit. This proposal is currently under consideration. Such agreements could precisely identify the respective roles, rights and responsibilities in relation to intellectual property and the commercialisation of research. Furthermore, the unpredictable nature of revenue from external research contracts makes it difficult for centres to make long-term commitments to clients or staff and an agreement between the centre and the University which addressed the underwriting of short term risk would encourage a more strategic approach to be taken by some of the centres. Directors of centres appreciate the flexibility they are allowed with respect to employment conditions, particularly salary packaging, but without some risk sharing arrangement they are unable to offer security of tenure which is at least as highly valued by staff as extra financial incentives.

Some ambivalence exists in regard to the University's participation in CRCs. Clearly there is pride in having succeeded in so many CRC competitive bids but many are questioning whether these centres are making any net contribution to the University. Future new or renegotiated CRC agreements need to identify more overtly the University's expectations of the CRC in terms of their contributions to research training, teaching and other University activities in return for the University's investment.

4.4 Commercialisation of Research

Adelaide Research and Innovation (ARI) Pty Ltd was formed in 2001, as a fully owned company of the University, to have oversight of research commercialisation. It aims to assist researchers to secure research funding from government and industry sources and is responsible for managing the commercialisation of research. ARI replaces the former commercial development company, Luminis Pty Ltd., which was having difficulty processing contracts in a timely fashion and had unreliable financial reporting systems. Researchers are generally positive about the support and advice they receive from ARI in relation to research grants and legal contracts, but are less convinced that it is able to offer them much assistance in relation to securing research contract opportunities.

The University has developed some impressive relationships with industry groups and companies but recognises that further emphasis should be placed on this area in particular. The URC is considering providing funding assistance for researchers to attend introductory

meetings with potential industry partners. The University's Research Park (Thebarton Campus) has also been particularly successful and is discussed in greater detail in section 7.2.

As noted above, the University has as one of its research objectives to "provide for the long-term sustainability of our research and education programs by broadening the research-funding base to include a range of national and international funding agencies and long term partnerships with industry, as well as through the exploitation of intellectual property". To achieve this objective, a concerted effort needs to be made to derive more commercial benefit from the University's research efforts. Some progress has been made in breaking down the perception that competitive research grants are more prestigious than commercial research contracts but more needs to be done, possibly through increased publicity, through the academic promotion policy and through financial reward sharing.

4.5 *Research Outcomes*

The University has evidence of good outcomes in research across a number of research indicators, particularly on an effective full-time basis, and it is to be commended for this. Trend data shows a steady increase across most measures with time; for instance, with respect to the number and value of national competitive grants, other forms of public and industry funding, and weighted research publications.

The University makes regular use of external comparisons of its research performance against Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and Department of Education, Science and Training statistics, particularly looking to the results of fellow Group of Eight institutions in these comparisons. In 1997, a benchmarking study was undertaken to compare performance on a number of measures with six other Australian universities. Although now dated, the results evidenced strong relative performance on most measures.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends the University for good outcomes in research across a number of research indicators and for a demonstrated trend of improved performance in most measures.

5. RESEARCH TRAINING

5.1 Objectives

The overall objective for the University's research training program is "to provide research students with an education that equips them to undertake innovative research, thereby enhancing Australia's future competitiveness in the global economy".

The panel noted positively that there has been considerable attention paid to reviewing the effectiveness of the University's research training program over recent times, to restructuring of the units that manage and administer the program, and to policy development. The University has identified from its self-assessment, and the panel agrees, that emphasis now needs to be placed on the development of rigorous processes for policy implementation and tracking.

5.2 Management of Research Training

The Board of Research Education and Development (BRED), a committee of Academic Board, advises the DVC R on research training policies and processes for HDR students. The membership of BRED is undergoing some change so that it will include the convenors of faculty higher degree committees.

BRED is responsible for producing two handbooks for HDR students: the 'Code of Practice for Maintaining and Monitoring Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Degrees' and the 'Research Higher Degree Administration Policies and Procedures'. The former is an adaptation of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) Code of the same name. Both appear to be helpful documents, although a number of students met by the panel were not aware of them. The panel noted that the policies and procedures document requires updating to reflect recent changes in policy. For instance, no mention is made of the requirement for the minimum resources proforma to be completed by schools as new students are accepted (see section 5.5).

The Dean of Graduate Studies acts as the convenor of BRED. The current Dean had only just taken up his appointment at the time of the panel's visit. The Graduate Centre, established in January 2002, has been formed to centralise the management and administration of graduate student services.

As required by University policy, each school has a Postgraduate Co-ordinator. This system generally appears to work well in ensuring oversight of the progress of students at the local level. The challenge for the University is significant with its substantial number of postgraduates, especially in the research centres.

There has been a considerable amount of attention paid to the development of policy and systems for the University's research training programs over recent years and to system review, such as reviews of the Structured Program in October 2001 (see section 5.4) and the HDR program in November 2001.

The HDR review was undertaken by an external panel, which had as its scope the present effectiveness, attractiveness and possible future directions of the higher degrees by research program. The review made a number of recommendations for improvements, the majority of which were endorsed by the Academic Board. The review committee concluded by noting

that the fundamental matter to be addressed is the need for “a structure that enables a cycle of policy development, policy implementation, and policy reform to become an inextricable part of all aspects of the life of the University”. The audit panel concurs with this view. Some solid work has been completed on policy development and attention is now required to ensure that it is implemented effectively across the University. This is the combined responsibility of the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Centre, under the oversight of BRED.

At BRED’s request, the Board’s Quality Issues Working Party has been considering the means by which BRED can assess whether University policies are being implemented. A paper has been prepared that notes, for each major policy, how and by whom implementation of the policy will be monitored. This is a helpful first step.

The panel noted that many of the recommendations raised by the review of the HDR program have been acted on and that BRED, through its four working parties, is ensuring that continued attention is being paid to those areas where work is ongoing.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends the manner in which the Board of Research Education and Development has responded actively to the outcomes of the review of the higher degree by research program.

BRED has recently increased the mechanisms in place for obtaining feedback from research students and supervisors to supplement the exit survey of completing HDR students (in use since 1993) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire. Biennial surveys of commencing HDR students, mid-candidature students and supervisors were introduced in late 2001. The results of the first administration of these surveys have provided a wealth of information that should prove useful in directing improvement efforts.

In terms of obtaining external reference points for its HDR programs, the examiners for all PhD theses are required to be external to the University. Given the Strategic Plan objective “to achieve world-class research and research training” consideration should be given to mandating the use of at least one international examiner for all PhD theses. This would allow the University to have greater confidence in the international standing of its PhD graduates.

HDR student numbers have been declining since 1999, partly due to the declining population in South Australia. In response to this, increased funding for scholarships is to be made available and more intensive recruiting of honours graduates from interstate and overseas universities is to be undertaken. Such initiatives are regarded by the University as essential if it is to maintain and enhance its reputation for research performance.

5.3 *Supervision*

The 2001 review of the HDR program recommended that a system of co-supervision be put in place for all students as a means of ensuring continuity of supervision and this has been accepted as University policy. In the mid-candidature survey of HDR students this year, 65 per cent of respondents reported that they have a panel of supervisors and meet with supervisors fortnightly (as is also required by University policy). It is apparent that further attention is needed to ensure that all areas of the University comply with this policy. Students with only one supervisor are vulnerable to disruption of their studies should their supervisor be absent for any length of time, and the panel talked to a number of students for whom this had been a problem. A number of postgraduate students identified that reduced staff numbers in some schools, and the priority that staff need to give to undergraduate teaching, could make co-supervision difficult. Nonetheless, it is an important issue and strategies for addressing it,

such as increasing the level of co-operation with other Adelaide universities, need to be put in place. The annual progress report form (see below) now requires the supervisor to declare any intentions for leave in the coming year and indicate what arrangements will be put in place to cover this period. This is a helpful way of reminding supervisors of their responsibility to students.

Recommendation 17

That the Graduate Centre ensure that the policy of co-supervision is implemented throughout the University.

The progress of Masters and PhD students is formally reviewed at least annually using a multi-part form developed by the Graduate Centre. (For PhD students studying in a remote location, formal review occurs every six months.) At least two academic staff members are required to be involved in the review of each student: one is the principal supervisor and the other may be the School Postgraduate Co-ordinator, Head of School, Deputy Head of School or another senior academic staff member.

The formal progress review involves a complex series of steps, with the student, supervisor(s) and Postgraduate Co-ordinator (or Head of School) completing various sections of the form. An interview between the student and Postgraduate Co-ordinator is required. The Co-ordinator may also hold a separate interview with the supervisor(s) if considered appropriate. The forms do not clearly indicate whether a discussion between the student and supervisor(s) is required.

The process has a number of other complexities or contradictions. The first relates to the identification of problems that may have been experienced. Students are requested to provide details of any disagreements, grievances or problems experienced during the review period. Although they are informed that this may be done by attaching a separate sheet in confidence, this is in direct contradiction to the reminder included immediately below that question that attempts must be made to resolve problems at the local level. A second is that, when the form is signed by the student after the supervisor(s) and Head of School have completed their assessment of progress, the student is also required to declare his/her agreement with that assessment.

The procedure appears to be unnecessarily complex and thought should be given to streamlining it, perhaps by having one form which student and supervisors complete jointly following a meeting specifically to discuss progress. The panel suggests that the Graduate Centre investigate the processes in place in other universities which may serve as helpful models.

The role of co- or external supervisors in the formal review needs also to be made explicit. Ensuring that all supervisors are involved would assist in maintaining continuity of supervision should the principal supervisor need to be absent.

Provision should also be made for involving another senior academic staff member in the review should the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator be a member of the student's supervisory panel.

Recommendation 18

That the process for the regular formal review of Masters and PhD student progress be revised, the forms simplified and the role of co-supervisors in the review process be made explicit.

In response to the University's mid-candidature survey and in discussion with the panel, a number of students observed that the annual formal review does not necessarily allow for the detection and correction of problems while they are still at an early stage. The role of the Postgraduate Co-ordinator as a person with whom students may discuss problems or potential problems informally should be re-emphasised to students.

The Dean, Graduate Studies is intending to develop a system for establishing learning agreements between students and supervisors, and this is encouraged by the panel.

5.3.1 Supervisor development

The Graduate Centre runs voluntary professional development workshops for commencing and experienced supervisors. Approximately 120 new supervisors have attended the workshop since the beginning of 2000.

Professional development for existing supervisors is provided by workshops run by the Graduate Centre within schools or faculties. Topics offered in 2002 include implications of the Research Training Scheme for supervisors and guidance for helping students with writing (with a total of approximately 40 participants having attended these sessions at the time of the panel's visit).

As is the case in any university, the level of dedication and responsiveness of supervisors to their students varies considerably at Adelaide. The 2001 review of the HDR program identified a number of issues related to supervisor development, in particular recommending that "all academic staff new to supervision should attend a substantial and mandatory supervision development workshop program (that should include a briefing session on institutional policies and procedures)" and that there should be "an ongoing series of supervisor support workshops" for existing supervisors. These recommendations were endorsed by the VCC for implementation in the year following the review. Greater progress has been achieved to date on the latter recommendation than the former. All new academic staff are required to undergo a program of teaching development which includes supervision training, but the University has identified that this will not necessarily ensure training for those staff who are not new academics, but are nonetheless new to supervision.

Recommendation 19

That greater emphasis be placed on the training of new and existing supervisors of higher degree by research students to ensure greater awareness and implementation of University policies for effective research training.

5.4 Structured Program

The Structured Program was introduced in 1993, with the aim of ensuring that all HDR students have the knowledge and skills required to complete their research program. It comprises a mandatory core component involving completion and presentation of a research proposal in a school seminar, and a directed studies component which supervisors may construct to meet particular needs of individual students. International students for whom English is a second language are required to complete the Integrated Bridging Program as part of the directed studies component of the Structured Program (see section 3.1).

BRED's Quality Issues Working Party (QIWP) undertook a review of the Structured Program in October 2001 and as a result of this review a number of changes have been made, among which is a reduction in the duration of the core component from 12 to 6 months, (consistent

with the AVCC Code of Practice for Maintaining and Monitoring Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Degrees). In recommending this change, the QIWP emphasised the importance of a comprehensive induction for students at school-level and for early and consistent meetings between student and supervisor. It noted that students in the humanities and social sciences, in particular, often take some time to determine their research proposal and, in recognition of this, enabled the Student Matters sub-committee of BRED to consider students' applications for an extension to the Structured Program. This issue still appears to be causing some concern to students. In general, however, there is considerable support for the Structured Program, from both students and staff.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends the University for its Structured Program for higher degree by research students.

As noted above, schools are now required to include an induction element into the compulsory component of the Structured Program. There is considerable variability across the University on the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of these induction programs. Once the Graduate Centre becomes better established, it may be able to work more closely with individual schools to further develop the student induction they offer and encourage improvement through the sharing of good practice.

5.5 *Resources for the Support of Students*

BRED has developed a Minimum Departmental Resources Proforma which requires the Head of School, Postgraduate Co-ordinator, principal supervisor and student to agree on the minimum resources which will be provided to the student during the course of candidature. The Proforma must be completed and returned to the Graduate Centre, as part of the requirement for the core component of the Structured Program for all 2002 commencing students. This is a commendable initiative. As it becomes increasingly adopted across the University, and provided the expectations it establishes are met, the Proforma should provide a sound foundation for the support of research degree students.

Students report that the use of the form is helpful in clarifying the basic level of resources and access to research infrastructure they can expect. However, some students have found that, even when the resources have been agreed, it can take some time for them to be provided.

The University is not yet using the information returned by schools on the Proforma to assess the adequacy or otherwise of the support being provided to its higher degree students. It is perhaps too early to expect a systematic analysis of this sort. At this stage, the University reports that the level of support available per student is heavily dependent on the availability of funding through the Research Training Scheme and grant earnings and that resources provided to students vary from school to school, depending on the project.

In early 2002, the QIWP conducted an on-line questionnaire of HDR students who had completed at least one year of their studies. Approximately 70 per cent of respondents to that survey reported satisfaction with the facilities available to them. Where dissatisfaction was expressed, it was often related to accommodation, access to computers and lack of clarity about what will/will not be provided by the school.

These are issues that the University should continue to monitor closely to ensure that students have access, on an equitable basis, to an acceptable level of resources and support for their research students.

5.6 *Research Training Outcomes*

Completion rates for HDR students are above the national average. However, the University did not meet its target load for 2001. The Portfolio attributes this in part to reductions in the number of scholarships offered as a result of budget cuts.

The 1999 and 2000 results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire indicate above average ratings by students on 24 of the 28 scales. Feedback from the University's internal surveys of students indicates that students are generally highly satisfied with the supervision they receive. Interim findings from the mid-candidature survey indicated the main areas of particular dissatisfaction to be the levels of the library resources available and the clarity and responsiveness of administrative services.

The University has a relatively high proportion of its bachelor graduates who elect to undertake study for higher degrees.

6. LEARNING AND TEACHING

6.1 Objectives

The University's Strategic Plan notes that: "learning is the core activity of the University, bringing students and staff together through active learning and the pursuit of knowledge. The University aims to produce graduates whose knowledge, skills and commitment to lifelong learning enable them to play a significant role in their community". In the panel's view, teaching and learning activities have until recently been given significantly less attention than this statement would suggest. This is evidenced by poor implementation and reporting against University-level plans, the lack of an agreed set of outcome measures, insufficient documentation on teaching policies, practices and unsystematic processes for evaluating the performance of academic programs and courses. The situation has been exacerbated by the relatively weak state of the previous Academic Board and of the Faculty Boards. In the last three years, attention has been paid to addressing each of these areas.

The Learning and Teaching Plan 2000-2002 is the second iteration of such a plan (the first plan, for the period 1998-2001, was developed in 1998). The current Plan has goals and related strategies for a number of topics; such as evaluation and review mechanisms; information technology and telecommunications and recognising and rewarding excellence and the promotion of learning. In 2000, strategic priorities for the year were identified and included in the Plan, accompanied by a statement of accountability and indicators. Since 2000, annual reports from faculties against the Learning and Teaching Plan have become standard practice, with consolidated reports against the Plan produced by the DVC E&P. In response to these reports, priorities for the next year are identified. The panel requested and was provided with a small sample of responses from some schools reporting against the 2001 priorities and the University's overall report against these priorities. They indicate progress being made against each priority.

The Learning and Teaching Plan is being redeveloped for 2003-2005. Clearly, it will be important for the current processes for monitoring and reviewing performance against the plan to be retained and extended.

Staff:-student ratios have increased from 13.7 in 1995 to 14.8 in 2001. In its Performance Portfolio, the University points out that although this figure remains significantly more favourable than the national average (19.9 in 2001) and the average for other Group of Eight universities, there are considerable variations across faculties and disciplines. In the areas of relatively higher demand, the ability of staff to provide the teaching, and the capacity of the physical resources to support teaching activities, are strained. This problem is by no means widespread across the University and is being experienced only in those schools teaching above their undergraduate load.

The panel met with staff and students from some of the schools affected by heavy undergraduate student demand. Most undergraduate students are conscious of the relatively large class sizes in these subjects and seem aware that their teachers are extremely busy but do not feel that this is adversely affecting the quality of the teaching they are receiving, although they do feel reluctant to approach staff for additional assistance. Postgraduate students, too, often feel inhibited in approaching their supervisor because of their awareness of the staff member's workload and the recognition that timetable and examination schedules mean undergraduates often take priority. Staff from these schools report that the time available to undertake research is severely restricted.

The panel was informed that an adjustment has been made to the budget model for 2003 that will better align resources and student numbers. It is to be hoped that this may relieve some pressure on staff in these high demand areas.

6.2 Curriculum Rationalisation

The authority to introduce new courses and to revise and delete courses was delegated to Executive Deans in 1992. Approximately 2000 courses and 800 academic programs were offered in 2001. The University has been concerned about the implications these high numbers have for academic workload and the spreading of resources, particularly library resources (see also section 6.9).

The panel sought information on the number of courses and programs discontinued in the past five years. In relation to courses, no central University-wide record is maintained of changes to course offerings (other than what is printed in the Calendar) or of the reasons for any course deletions. For programs, indicative figures showed that approximately 136 programs had been discontinued in the period 1998-2003. The Academic Board has recognised the need for formal course and program discontinuation procedures, based on considerations of quality as well as cost.

The VCC established a sub-committee to look at curriculum rationalisation in early 2000 and a curriculum rationalisation framework and guidelines were devised. The University is unsure of the extent to which this framework has been implemented across the faculties and recognises that it will be important to develop a process to monitor this. Some faculties and schools have developed their own approaches to implement the guidelines and the panel was given an example of the discipline curriculum profiles from one faculty. These profiles provided a very thorough analysis of the student enrolment and retention patterns of the programs offered in the faculty.

6.3 Program Approval and Review

In 2000, new processes were put in place by the Academic Program Accreditation and Review Panel (APARP, a standing committee of Academic Board) for the approval of new programs and the major review of existing programs. The process requires the involvement of a student representative and a library representative to comment on the application. For programs involving off-shore delivery, the endorsement of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) is required. The tightening of the approval processes for new programs is endorsed.

APARP also requires all academic programs approved since 2000 to be subject to cyclic review (approximately every five to seven years for bachelor awards and every two years for non-bachelor awards). A schedule for these reviews has been developed, with ten to be undertaken in 2002. Based on the experiences with reviews to date, the University has identified that there is a need to reconsider the criteria, accountabilities and schedule for program review. Consideration is currently being given to whether this same review process should be applied to programs approved prior to 2000. There is some uncertainty amongst APARP members about the most appropriate way to proceed. Clearly, review of existing programs is just as important as for new programs and APARP is ideally placed to maintain oversight of both processes.

The panel learned that employers and alumni are interested and willing to become more significantly involved in providing feedback and advice to the University regarding curriculum. This had also emerged from the University's own self-assessment and the panel

supports the University's identification as a planned improvement the need to "develop approaches to enhance feedback processes from employers and graduates to inform improvements in teaching and learning and support services". The place of employer and alumni feedback in the review of new and existing programs will be an important aspect of the planned revision of the review criteria.

Recommendation 20

That work proceed without delay on the planned review of the criteria and accountabilities for the review of academic programs and that a revised schedule be developed to include those programs approved prior to 2000.

It has been noted above that the roles and responsibilities of Academic Board sub-committees such as APARP and their relationship to the Academic Board itself require clarification. This would seem to be a prerequisite to the effective implementation of a program review process.

6.4 *Learning and Teaching Outcomes and Assuring Quality*

At present, the University has no systematic means for assuring itself of its academic standards at an institutional level. The ineffective functioning of the previous Academic Board (see section 1.2.1) led to insufficient attention being given to assuring academic standards at this level. There is variability across the University in the nature and extent of processes used for assuring academic standards.

The University has taken a somewhat reactive approach to addressing the issue of academic standards. For instance, concerns about comparability of Honours standards led to a review in 2000-2001 and the subsequent approval by Academic Board of a Code of Practice for fourth year Honours programs. Monitoring compliance with the Code is currently left to faculties and this is among many areas that should be reclaimed as a function of Academic Board.

In some schools, standards are assessed through a systematic process of annual visits by external examiners or moderators. This is principally in the disciplines that rely heavily on professional accreditation. The University has professional schools in the disciplines of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Psychology, Law, Engineering and Commerce. These operate under the jurisdiction of external accrediting bodies, to which they are accountable for the quality of their academic programs. As a result of recent assessments by the relevant professional bodies, Engineering, Medicine and Psychology have obtained maximum accreditation and Nursing obtained full approval for their programs. While achieving professional accreditation establishes that minimum requirements are being met and is an important aspect of the quality assurance system of schools in the professional disciplines, the panel considers that other methods of performance evaluation for these schools are also important.

In other areas of the University little consideration appears to have been given to how standards may be assured. In some discipline areas there was no evidence of cross-checking standards with comparable institutions or even making use of internal trend data.

The Performance Portfolio notes that Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) information is not much used by many disciplines. Low response rates and problems in providing data in a timely manner have led to it being considered an unreliable and ineffective tool for quality improvement. The Office of Planning and Development is to trial electronic versions of CEQ in 2003, which may overcome some of the problems of the past. No alternative survey tools

have been developed for general use within the University to assist with monitoring teaching and learning outcomes.

The Performance Portfolio notes that “the University’s approach to assessment is to establish formal institutional principles that allow departments and schools considerable discretion and variation in policy and practice at local level” and that “the University has no formal systematic monitoring process in place specifically for assessment practices”. Many staff and students met by the panel seemed unaware of policies and procedures relating to assessment. The University has suggested that the assessment rules require rationalisation and more effective promotion. It has also indicated that it intends to introduce a system of biennial audits of assessment practices and outcomes in selected areas and that the audits will involve external reference points. This suggestion is strongly endorsed by the panel.

The University has developed five groups of performance indicators related to teaching and learning that are reported against annually to Council. They are student entry qualifications; institutional finances and student diversity; proportion of international and fee-paying students; progression and retention rates; and student satisfaction and outcomes as measured by the CEQ and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS). Faculty-level use of these indicators is variable. With respect to these outcome measures, CEQ results show a consistently high level of student satisfaction, but given the University’s considerable reservations about the reliability of the data, they should be interpreted with caution. GDS results show that graduate employment rates are higher than the average for the State.

The University considers that a current weakness is the lack of a commonly accepted set of measure of performance and outcomes in learning and teaching across the University, and that benchmarking at national and international levels is rare.

Recommendation 21

That the Academic Board, as a matter of urgency, establish at the institutional level a comprehensive process by which it may assure itself that the University’s undergraduate pass and honours degrees are of comparable standard in terms of content, scope and evaluation criteria with those of other Australian and overseas universities.

This will need to include a much more systematic approach to the collection, analysis and use of student and alumni evaluation of teaching and of graduate outcome data. Feedback from employers will also be important. For the professional disciplines, professional accreditation will continue to form an important component of assuring standards.

6.4.1 Graduate attributes

The University developed a set of graduate attributes in 1998. In late 2001, the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) required all faculties to develop, based on the University’s attribute set, graduate attributes relevant to their discipline areas.

The Committee has also formed a working party to investigate how the graduate attributes may be integrated into curriculum design processes, teaching and assessment practice and academic staff development and promotion. At the time of the panel’s visit the working party was close to concluding its work and a report to Academic Board was being prepared for consideration at its first meeting in 2003. Emphasis at this stage is being placed on undergraduate attributes (although a statement of attributes of students completing the Adelaide PhD has also been developed) and the panel endorses and supports this ongoing

work as an important element of the University's quality assurance for its teaching and learning.

6.5 Learning and Teaching Development Unit

The Learning and Teaching Development Unit (LTDU) is a product of an external review of the former Advisory Centre for University Education (ACUE) conducted in August 2001. The Centre was established in 1973 as a centre for the support of teaching and learning. The recently formed unit brings together the ACUE, the Mathematics Learning Centre and the Online Learning and Teaching Unit. In responding to the review, the core business of the various units has been reconsidered and the Unit's role is now much more focused on serving the University's strategic teaching and learning objectives.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends the University for initiating and responding rapidly to the external review of its central learning and teaching support services.

The LTDU still remains rather more reactive than proactive in its approach to staff, but it is intended that this will change. New academic staff are required to attend the 'Teaching at University' course run by LTDU and an average of 35 attended in each of 2001 and 2002.

ACUE developed 'LEAP', a web site which hosts institution-specific and discipline-specific materials on approaches to learning, teaching and curriculum issues. LEAP was short-listed in 2000 for the Australian Awards in Educational Publishing. The LEAP site has been revised over recent months and a new reporting system established that allows for information on the number of 'hits' to be determined. This is essentially the only means by which the effectiveness of the site is determined. The University notes in its Performance Portfolio that it needs to "establish processes to document University-wide good practices and policies for the management of learning and teaching, through improvements to LEAP" and the panel endorses this. Although it is not the only mechanism employed for discussion of teaching and learning issues, considerable reliance is placed on LEAP for the sharing of good practice with respect to teaching. The usage rates of the site suggest that this may not be the most efficient means of encouraging staff to reflect on and improve their teaching.

Recommendation 22

That the University further develop its range of other mechanisms to complement the 'LEAP' initiative in order to promote the sharing of good practice in approaches to learning, teaching and curriculum development.

6.6 Evaluation of Learning and Teaching

The University's self-assessment identified the wide variety of practices in the evaluation of teaching effectiveness across the University and found that in some schools evaluation is "sporadic, unsystematic and regarded as the prerogative of the individual staff member". The new policy for Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (see below) should improve the consistency of practice across the University.

In addition to the peer and student evaluations of teaching discussed below, the University provides for the use of teaching portfolios in promotion applications.

Peer Evaluation

A system of Peer Evaluation of Teaching is in place which can be used by those applying for promotion or tenure as support for their application. The process involves three colleagues giving confidential feedback to Human Resources through completion of a questionnaire. The system is not widely used at present. The LTDU has plans to review the policy.

Student Evaluation

The Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (SELT) policy came into effect in June 2002, replacing the former policy on the student evaluation of teaching. Associated with the new policy is a revised evaluation instrument and guidelines for its implementation and the LTDU has been involved in streamlining the analysis of completed evaluation forms which had previously relied heavily on manual handling.

The new policy ensures SELT information is made available to the teacher and to the relevant Head of School and allows for Heads to initiate an evaluation if desired. Evaluations of courses, programs and individual staff members will take place according to a schedule agreed within the school which should assist in avoiding overload of students. The guidelines suggest that programs be evaluated at least every five years and courses at least every three. Evaluations of individual teachers are expected to be conducted regularly, with the frequency agreed between the staff member and his or her Head of School.

In commenting on their experiences under the previous policy, many students reported their perception that the evaluations may not be taken seriously by staff and that they were not made aware of any changes made to courses as a result of their feedback. The guidelines suggest that the evaluations on courses and programs should include a statement for students on the ways in which the results will be used. Some lecturers administer a mid-semester formal evaluation and respond to the results of this in the second part of the course. Students commented favourably on this approach, since it allows them to experience directly the changes made in response to their feedback.

The panel strongly supports the University's intention to develop faculty and institution wide monitoring of SELT outcomes, to inform learning and teaching strategies and for quality assurance purposes. Indeed, the policy notes that the ULTC, through annual reports from the LTDU, will monitor the SELT process to ensure that it contributes valid and reliable information for the enhancing the quality of education.

Recommendation 23

That, as signalled in the Performance Portfolio, the University develop a system for systematic monitoring and reporting of the results of student evaluations of teaching and for providing feedback to students on the actions taken in response to those evaluations.

6.7 Use of Technology in Teaching

The University's approach to the use of new educational technologies in teaching has been to regard their use as a supplement to traditional teaching methods and as a means of increasing flexibility for on-campus students rather than as a replacement for face-to-face teaching. The relevant goal in the Learning and Teaching Plan is "to encourage the development and use of student-centered and flexible learning through information technology and telecommunications".

A centrally supported learning management system, MyUni, has been implemented (after being piloted in 2001) and emphasis in the past year has been placed on staff development. The Online Learning and Teaching Development Unit, now part of the LTDU (see section 6.5), has held a number of introductory workshops to familiarise staff with the system.

As at the end of October 2001, approximately 48 per cent of the University's courses involved some use of the web. This figure is consistent with the current national average. None of the University's courses were fully on-line (that is, courses with no face-to-face component) at the time of the survey. Teaching staff are increasingly placing some course elements on the web. Use of the bulletin board for communicating with students is also beginning to occur. Since the survey was conducted, the Graduate Diploma in Gastronomy was offered fully on-line in 2002. The University is investigating making similar arrangements with other courses in 2003.

It appears to the panel that MyUni has been effectively implemented and the University is supported for this. ITS has been responsible for the technical implementation of the system, while academic aspects have been co-ordinated through the DVC E&P's portfolio. The system is generally well received by students and it has indeed led to increased flexibility for students. The panel encourages the University in the further development of this initiative. Some further investigation into the actual uses to which MyUni is being put, with a view to sharing good practice in the use of online support of teaching and learning, would be worthwhile.

6.8 Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2000-2002

The Strategic Plan 2001-2005 signals the importance of "promoting a culture of mutual respect that makes social justice and cultural diversity key components for our quest for excellence". In light of this objective, the Director of the Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies (CAIRS; then known as Wilto Yerlo) was asked to develop a University-wide strategy for indigenous education. The resulting Indigenous Education Strategic Plan was endorsed by VCC in 1999. Elements of it have been adopted by a number of faculties. Although some senior managers have been supportive of the plan, little substantive progress has been made towards meeting the goals of the Plan to date and there is a need for senior management to take greater responsibility for driving the implementation of the Plan throughout the University.

CAIRS has one full-time student adviser and at the time of the panel's visit was appointing a second person. The programs offered by the Centre and the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (a constituent part of CAIRS) are seen as pathways for indigenous students to continue into studies elsewhere in the University.

The Centre's Director participates in an informal network of directors from equivalent centres in other universities.

Recommendation 24

That the University identify a senior academic “champion” to work with the Director and staff of the Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies on communicating and implementing the Indigenous Education Strategic Plan.

The panel notes that, as part of the Strategy, the appointment of appropriately qualified Indigenous Australians to the academic staff of the University had been identified as a priority for implementation commencing in 2000. Progress on this would serve as a role model and provide added leadership for Indigenous students or Indigenous studies.

6.9 *The Library*

The Library has been adversely affected by budget cuts, with reductions in staff numbers and materials spending. A recent journal cancellation exercise has led to approximately \$1.2m of research journals being cut (approximately 30 per cent of serial titles). Over the past 10 years, approximately \$4m worth of journal titles have been cancelled. This probably accounts for the dissatisfaction with library resources expressed by HDR students in a recent internal survey (see section 5.6). In addition, the University comments in its Performance Portfolio that the number of programs and courses on offer has meant that resources are spread thinly, particularly for the Library. Despite this, comparative figures published by the Council for Australian University Libraries (CAUL) indicate that for 2001 the Library still performed relatively well in terms of indicators such as acquisitions expenditure per population member.

The Library has been attempting to increase unmediated document delivery systems to address its budget-related problems and appears to the panel to have kept pace with the changing patterns of scholarly publishing. An example is that it has entered into an agreement with the other research universities to provide a package of electronic journals. This arrangement is about to expire, and the Librarian is currently negotiating with Executive Deans to secure additional short-term funding so that it can be extended.

The Library has also participated in a study co-ordinated by the National Library to investigate the overlap in collection with the University of South Australia and Flinders University, which identified only a 6.3 per cent overlap in the respective collections of journal titles.

Many HDR students commented to the panel that the opening hours, particularly over weekends, are too short. The Library appreciates this problem but is unable to resource increased hours. It plans to increase emphasis on electronic collections as one strategy to improve access for students and staff.

It is evident that the budget constraints currently being faced by the University are having a tangible negative effect on the Library. The panel encourages the Library to continue with its reviews of the way it operates and investigations into alternative support systems that may allow it to operate more effectively with its reduced staff numbers. The problems being experienced by the Library are not unique to the University, and the Library should continue to derive benefits from its ongoing involvement in benchmarking projects with other university libraries (either through CAUL or otherwise).

7. COMMUNITY SERVICE AND OUTREACH

The University's self-assessment has identified that the term 'community service' is variously interpreted throughout the University and is seen as encompassing activities such as consultancy, links with secondary schools, and staff involvement in public talks and membership of external committees, boards and advisory groups. The University feels that a more co-ordinated approach to community service activities is required "through greater management, direction, support and reward of good practice". To address this, it plans to undertake an audit of the University's community-related activities (the last such audit occurred in 1994) and to develop a University-wide policy and framework for community service.

While there is clearly evidence of good relationships with the community on many levels (some of which are mentioned below), the panel's discussions with members of the external community suggested that they would like to see greater opportunities for interaction and involvement with the University. In particular, there is a desire not only to become more involved in terms of funding and revenue support, but also to provide feedback on course quality and relevance. There is recognition amongst Council members and senior managers that the University has not used its central city location to develop the number and strength of links within Adelaide that its location allows.

The panel supports the University's intention to undertake a review of the community service activities and use the findings of this review to develop a University-wide policy and framework. For a relatively modest investment in this area, the potential returns are considerable as the local community generally holds the University in high regard and would, in the panel's estimation, be likely to respond positively if provided with appropriate opportunities to do so.

The University's mission is to "contribute to the wealth and well-being of South Australia, Australia and the international community through education, research and community service of distinction". Specific objectives for contributing to civic and cultural leadership in the community include:

- "building productive partnerships with government, business, the professions and the arts;
- helping to identify opportunities to attract new industries to the State and to support them through the University's research and educational capabilities;
- forming strong relationships with other educational sectors and research organisations in South Australia;
- playing a leadership role in community awareness and discussion of contemporary issues and concerns;
- fostering a community service ethic; and
- maintaining mutually supportive relationships with the University alumni."

Each of these objectives will be addressed in turn.

7.1 *Building Productive Partnerships*

The panel was provided with a number of different examples of the ways in which the University is "building productive partnerships with government, business, the professions and the arts". These include various schools engaged in consultancies with government and industry, links with the State Museum, the key role played by the Elder Conservatorium in the

musical life in Adelaide, the collaboration taking place with the oil and gas industry and many others.

Notwithstanding these success stories, many on Council and within the academic staff believe more could be done. The impression the panel gained was that the existing partnerships are very much a product of individual initiative by staff members who do not always feel that they are adequately supported or that their achievements are sufficiently recognised in terms of career progression. As an example, a highly regarded internship program which places undergraduates in State parliamentary offices is run by a single energetic individual as a part-time arrangement yet it has the potential for expanding politicians' understanding of the University and the issues it confronts.

7.2 *Identifying Industry Opportunity*

The University's Research Park (Thebarton Campus) is one of the major means through which the University fulfills this objective. The Park, which has been self-funding since inception, has been extremely successful in attracting university and commercial tenants. The Park currently houses 61 tenants, of which 21 are spin-off companies created collaboratively by staff and students. The Graduate Entrepreneurship Program, run at Thebarton, is aimed at assisting students who have a project with potential for commercialisation to become established in their own business. Students are provided with a scholarship and support in kind. They spend one day per week in structured activities that lead to the Graduate Diploma in Entrepreneurship and the remainder of the week developing their project. The number of students in the program at any time varies depending on the number of scholarships that can be provided and it has been realised that further sources of funding will be required to ensure the program's sustainability. This program could serve as a model for others to follow.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends the University's Research Park (Thebarton Campus) which has developed a successful business model and which supports existing companies and contributes to the establishment of start-up companies in South Australia. The Graduate Entrepreneurship Program, run at the Thebarton campus, is also commended.

7.3 *Relationships with other Educational Sectors and Research Organisations*

A large proportion of the University's student intake is from the more affluent suburbs and regional areas of the State. Representatives of local secondary schools met by the panel perceive that the University has been relatively uninterested in building links with schools from non-traditional catchment areas and has relied heavily on the first preferences it attracts from students attending the city's private schools. The University recognises that it needs to expend further effort in changing this perception by highlighting its interactions with a range of less-affluent schools, particularly in Adelaide's western and northern suburbs. Over the last five years, the University has run outreach and schools links programs in the western suburbs through its Thebarton campus. The University's Fairway Scheme provides special access to students from regional schools and schools that have low application rates to university. In terms of meeting its objective for strong relationships with other educational sectors in the State, sustained attention to building effective links with a larger number of secondary schools is required.

Student Information and Services, and in particular the Prospective Student Office, is responsible for secondary school liaison and student recruitment. The panel received positive

comment from a number of external stakeholders with respect to the course advice offered by the Prospective Students Office to intending students.

Of potential benefit to students and local employers would be an enhancement to the existing links with institutions in the TAFE system and other educational providers. Most faculties within the University have credit transfer arrangements in place and there are some good examples of collaborative activities occurring in some areas. However, there is room for improvement and a more systematic approach to establishing additional formal links beyond those in place should be developed. An examination of the opportunities for joint course offerings, resource sharing, applied research projects and full-fee short courses could be beneficial for all parties concerned and would further the achievement of the University's objective for strong relations with other educational sectors.

The University has established some co-operative ventures with other universities in Adelaide, for instance the three university libraries have established a system of reciprocal borrowing rights (see section 6.9). At a time of financial pressure on the Australian higher education system, the panel endorses the need to continually seek opportunities for mutually beneficial co-operation with other universities and research organisations.

The Professional and Continuing Education unit offers a range of courses aimed at community and business customers as well as staff and students of the University. Its programs include: language courses, community courses, professional development, Year 12 revision and English language centre programs.

As already noted, the University's involvement in CRCs and other research centres has led to relationships with other universities and research organisations both within South Australia and more broadly.

7.4 *Leading Community Awareness of Contemporary Issues and Fostering a Community Service Ethic*

In common with most universities, the University's Marketing and Public Relations Office publishes a guide for the media, which identifies the expertise of staff so that they may more easily be contacted for comment on contemporary issues. The guide is currently published in hard-copy and is updated approximately every eighteen months. Plans are underway for it to be made available on the web. In 2000, the Office developed also a database for recording the appearances of the University's staff in print and electronic media. A column listing those staff who have featured in the media in the previous month is regularly included in the University newspaper "Adelaidean".

The Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies (CAIRS) plays a significant leadership role in relation to the University's outreach to indigenous communities both within South Australia and interstate. CAIRS plays a significant national role in addressing Indigenous disadvantage and the panel encourages this. Particularly impressive is its use of music to introduce young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders into formal education and training. The role of CAIRS in relation to the University's Indigenous Education Strategy is discussed elsewhere in this Report (see section 6.8).

The promotion policy for academic staff includes service to the community and/or the discipline as one criterion to ensure that these activities are given some prominence. As noted above, the way in which community service is interpreted by staff varies considerably. The University's intended study of these various interpretations may assist in the development of a clearer definition of, and higher profile for, community service activities.

7.5 *Relationships with Alumni*

Following a review of the Alumni Association's governance structures in 1999, a new Alumni Board and Executive Committee were established and the Alumni, Community Relations and Development Office formed. Since this time work has concentrated on developing the Office's internal process and establishing a presence for the Office amongst the alumni community, and increasing the number and accuracy of the records in the alumni database. A fundraising plan has also been developed.

Alumni Association representatives met by the panel would welcome more support from the University in communicating with graduate students and a greater involvement in quality improvement. They would, for instance, enthusiastically support surveying graduates a few years after they leave the University about how relevant their studies have been in relation to what they have done subsequently, as they see this as a way of involving recent graduates more in the Association. In the panel's view, this would also be an important evaluation tool for use by the Academic Board in its quality assurance of teaching and learning activities.

8. INTERNATIONALISATION

8.1 *Objectives and Management*

The Strategic Plan 2001-2005 identifies “a global breadth of vision” as one of the values that underpins the University’s mission. In each of the three areas addressed in the plan – learning and teaching; research and research training and community service – there are specific objectives to raise the international profile or linkages of the University.

In 2001, the total international student EFTSU was 1,499, representing 12.5 per cent of the total EFTSU. Most students come from Malaysia, Singapore or Indonesia.

The University notes in its Performance Portfolio that the Internationalisation Plan 2000-2002, developed in 1999, established ambitious targets and addressed a range of issues in relation to international activities, but failed to provide a clear mission statement defining the University’s understanding of internationalisation. This plan has been partly superseded by the establishment, in May 2001, of the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) (PVC I) who is responsible for planning and managing the on-shore and off-shore international student market. A new business plan for international activities and a strategic marketing plan are currently under development. The emphasis in the new plan will be on means to increase the number of on-shore international students, with a target of approximately 12 per cent growth in on-shore international students. In setting institutional targets for increased international students, the pattern of student preferences and the differential effect the increased numbers may have on particular schools within the University are issues requiring careful attention and suitable flexibility in the budget model.

An International Office has recently been created and its final structure was still under consideration at the time of the panel’s visit. In broad terms, the responsibilities of the Office will be to oversee the management of off-shore and on-shore student recruitment, study abroad and exchange programs, articulation and twinning partnerships and other strategic alliances.

Each faculty has an Associate Dean (International) who is responsible for the recruitment of international students to on-shore programs. Schools and faculties initiate their own international links, with final approval required from the PVC I and the PVC I’s office serving as the central repository for agreements and contracts. Faculties have incorporated internationalisation into their own planning in various ways depending on their relative priorities.

The University has recognised the need for a clear plan with respect to its international activities and the panel endorses this. The International Office will have an important role to play in ensuring that the plan is effectively implemented across the University and that achievements against it are adequately monitored. It has the potential to serve as a helpful co-ordinating agent for the efforts of the faculties.

The panel’s discussions with international students revealed a relatively high degree of satisfaction with the University and the support provided to them. Considerable interest was expressed in having popular courses delivered in three trimesters rather than two semesters, to accelerate completion and reduce total costs (see also section 3.1).

8.2 *Overview of Off-Shore Activities*

The University has adopted a relatively conservative approach to off-shore teaching, with much greater emphasis having been placed on the recruitment of international students to study on-shore.

Current off-shore activities fall into one of four categories: University programs being taught off-shore wholly by University staff; University programs being taught off-shore by a combination of University staff and others; a twinning program, with teaching of the first years of the program provided by staff of the partner organisation; and articulation agreements, where student successfully completing the coursework of other institutions are awarded advanced standing into University programs.

The University has one twinning arrangement at present (with Sepang Institute of Technology, Malaysia) and two formal articulation arrangements with institutions in Malaysia and Indonesia. Health Sciences also has a twinning arrangement with the International Medical University in Kuala Lumpur. The latter provides language testing and language development to the University's students. In addition, Adelaide staff are involved in off-shore teaching in the Ngee Ann Adelaide Education Centre in Singapore and the Hopkins Training and Education Group, Hong Kong.

8.3 *Quality Assurance of International Teaching Activities*

The University is aware of its obligations under the Education Service for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act and also seeks to ensure that it complies with the AVCC Code of Practice for the Provision of Education to International Students. As part of the self-assessment for this audit, a workshop was held of relevant staff to discuss compliance with the Code. This has identified a number of areas where further attention is required.

In June 2000, the VCC approved the document "Quality Assurance in Offshore Arrangements: Principles and Guidelines". This is a good start and many of the items identified in the document have been actioned, but it did not appear to the panel that systems have been established to ensure that these principles are being met in all instances. In particular, active involvement of Academic Board in monitoring the quality of courses delivered off-shore and assuring equivalency with the University's on-shore courses was not apparent.

The University's self-assessment has revealed that while Memoranda of Understanding with off-shore partners include expectations of the student support and facilities that the partner will provide (such as library resources, computers, text books and classroom equipment, including laboratory equipment), documented processes for ensuring these expectations are being met are not yet in place. With respect to the agreement with Sepang Institute of Technology, the University's Academic Director (Asian Projects) visits the Institute monthly to talk to staff and students. This appears to be ensuring that issues are identified and addressed in a timely fashion at present.

Recommendation 25

That the University establish robust systems for assuring itself that the terms of its agreements with off-shore education providers are being met. The University's self-assessment has identified this as an area of concern.

Once the International Office has become established, it may be able to take a lead developing, in collaboration with the Academic Board, a quality assurance framework within which the University's off-shore activities can take place. In some central areas of the University, for instance the Library, little consideration has been given to date to identifying let alone attempting to meet the particular needs of the University's students studying off-shore.

The panel noted that the Undergraduate Entry Committee, a committee of Academic Board, is responsible for setting the entry criteria for all students and supports this.

There is currently no systematic review of the academic performance of off-shore international students relative to domestic students, although the ISC does intervene with students considered to be at risk of failing (see section 3.1) and the ULTC has asked for information on the grade distributions in undergraduate programs that will include a breakdown on figures for international students. The University has recognised that because this institutional perspective has not been taken, there has been no pooling of knowledge from any reviews that are being undertaken at local levels and the ability to share strategies for addressing the issue has been diminished.

Recommendation 26

That, as signalled in the Performance Portfolio, the University develop processes for the University-wide annual review of the international student academic performance. Most benefit from this would be obtained if it were part of a broader, systematic review of teaching and learning outcomes undertaken by the Academic Board.

8.4 *Internationalisation of the Curriculum*

Internationalisation of the curriculum is a responsibility of the PVC I. The University's Learning and Teaching Plan has as one of its goals "to develop, in students, an international focus to their education and, consequently, to their place in the world". A number of relevant strategies are associated with this goal. The identified priority for the current year is to "establish and disseminate best practice examples of internationalisation of curriculum and delivery". The PVC I's office is currently in the process of collecting information on the practices in place.

The panel was provided with one illustration of good practice related to increasing international awareness amongst staff from one school which runs workshops and fora on intercultural issues. This school has also surveyed its international students to assess their perception of the cultural awareness of staff. A report prepared by the Overseas Students Association in 2001 on cross-cultural awareness at the University suggested the adoption of a more coherent approach to cultural awareness and implementation and made a number of helpful recommendations in this regard. Many of the recommendations are yet to be addressed, but the University has noted in its Performance Portfolio that it plans "to embed cultural awareness training in staff induction and career development programs and actively promote this training for current staff" and the panel endorses this intention as a helpful first step.

APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

The University of Adelaide was founded in 1874. Its teaching started in 1876, although it was not established in its current location until the completion of the Mitchell Building in 1882. The establishment of the Elder Conservatorium in 1900 made the University the first institution in Australia to establish a conservatorium of music. The University established the Waite Agricultural Research Institute in 1924. By the 1930s the University could boast a neo-classical University Library, its own Great (Bonython) Hall and impressive student union cloisters.

The University appointed its first full-time Vice-Chancellor in 1948, Professor A. P. Rowe, who, until his departure a decade later, oversaw further development in infrastructure. Major building works were a facet of University life until the University's centenary in 1974, as increases in staff and student numbers required extensions to teaching space and administrative and recreational facilities. Increasing student numbers, a feature of the 1960s as much as the 1990s, led to the establishment of a southern campus of the University at Bedford Park in 1966, where large increases in population were expected; this campus soon became a separate university, the Flinders University of South Australia.

Transformations accelerated in the 1990s in the wake of the Dawkins reforms and new funding régimes. In 1991, the University merged with two other institutions: Roseworthy Agricultural College, 50 km north of Adelaide, an institution with its own distinguished history of educational services to rural communities and agriculture going back to 1883; and the City Campus of the former South Australian College of Advanced Education. This coincided with a major review of University governance, which resulted in considerable structural and cultural changes within the University, particularly with respect to the roles of the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar, and the introduction of deputy vice-chancellorial portfolios. At the same time, the Waite Institute was fully integrated into University structures and a commercial and research precinct was established in the inner western suburbs, at Thebarton.

The mid-1990s saw further adjustments to academic and administrative structures as the University worked through the consequences of the previous review and then addressed the difficulties arising from the changes to financial and policy frameworks introduced by the Federal government during the last part of the decade. Over the last two years this process of change has continued with the merger of the Flinders Street School of Music and the University's Elder Conservatorium to create a new entity, the Elder School of Music.

The University was made up of six administrative divisions and five faculties at the time of the audit. The faculties are: Engineering, Computer Science and Mathematics; Health Sciences; Humanities and Social Sciences; the Professions; and Sciences. Two Deputy Vice-Chancellors oversee portfolios in education and research, and a Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) has responsibility for activities related to internationalisation.

In 2001, the University had a total enrolment of 13,613 students (11,908 EFTSU). Of this number, 8.6 per cent were higher degree by research students, 7.8 per cent were enrolled in postgraduate coursework, and 12.5 per cent were international students. The total FTE staff number was 2,466.

APPENDIX B: THE OBJECTS OF AUQA

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Ms Robyn Harris, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne

Mr Peter Laver, Industry Consultant, Melbourne (Panel Chair)

Mr Ian Marshman, Senior Vice-Principal, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Melbourne

Professor Brian Robinson, Mellor Professor of Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of Otago, Dunedin

Professor James Taylor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Learning Services), University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba

