

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of the
Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School
and the
Australian International Hotel School

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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

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

Non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs) approved under the HESA for this purpose have become known as higher education providers, or HEPs. Although other institutions also provide higher education, the term 'HEP' is commonly used to denote only non self-accrediting higher education providers, and it is used in this sense in this Report. The HESA requires that HEPs in receipt of FEE-HELP funds must meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audit by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines.

This Report of the audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) of the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School and the Australian International Hotel School provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, and its commendations, affirmations and recommendations. For the purpose of this Report, the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS or the School) is used to describe the whole group, the Leura Campus is used to describe the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS) in Leura, and the Canberra Campus is used to describe the Australian International Hotel School (AIHS or the Canberra Campus). A brief introduction to the BMIHMS and the AIHS, including its mission, vision and principles, is given in Appendix A; the mission, objectives, vision and values of AUQA in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel in Appendix C; and abbreviations and technical terms used in this Report in Appendix D.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits of non self-accrediting HEPs on each organisation's own objectives, together with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* (National Protocols, available at: <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/>), the DEEWR *Audit Handbook for non self-accrediting Higher Education Providers* and other relevant legal requirements or codes to which the organisation is committed. The programs or courses of NSAIs are accredited by government accreditation authorities, so quality audits of HEPs do not include a detailed examination of the academic quality assurance processes for programs of study.

HEP audits under the HESA consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, firstly, the institution's objectives; and, secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The four QAFs are set out in the Handbook referred to above (and in the AUQA Audit Manual). Their primary purpose is to provide the HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance. In the report of its self review (the Performance Portfolio or Portfolio), the BMIHMS and the AIHS reported against each of the QAFs. The chapters in this Report use the four main topic headings provided by the QAFs. Within each chapter, all the criteria for that QAF are addressed, but usually in a holistic way rather than criterion by criterion.

On 20 July 2009, BMIHMS (and the AIHS) presented its submission to AUQA, comprising an 86-page report against the individual QAF criteria, including appendices and supplementary materials. NSAI HEP audit panels generally meet by teleconference, but as both members of this Panel are based in Victoria, the Panel met in Melbourne on 28 July 2009 to consider these materials.

The BMIHMS has headquarters in Sydney, and operates in Canberra and Leura in New South Wales. On 24 August 2009 the Audit Panel visited the AIHS in Canberra. On 25 August 2009 the Audit Panel visited the BMIHMS in Leura and on 26 August 2009 the Audit Panel met external stakeholders in Sydney on 27 August 2009.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 90 people during these audit visits, including the School directors, managers, senior staff, adjunct staff, students and external stakeholders. Sessions were also available for any member of the BMIHMS community to meet the Audit Panel but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 27 August 2009 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the BMIHMS as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the BMIHMS activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of audit findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an area in need of attention, whether in respect of approach, deployment or results, which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by the School, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. AUQA indicates that some recommendations and affirmations have a high priority. It is acknowledged that recommendations in this Audit Report may have resource implications.

Quotations taken from the Portfolio are identified as (PF p).

CONCLUSIONS

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

Introduction to Findings

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

In late 2008 the Laureate Education Inc purchased BMIHMS Pty Ltd (trading as BMIHMS - Leura and AIHS - Canberra. Over the last year the BMIHMS has been on a path of major change, redefining itself and activities at both campuses to align with the Laureate network and to build a culture of continuous improvement to support future growth aspirations.

Key challenges BMIHMS is currently working though are the standardisation of policies and processes across the Canberra and Leura campuses, and the embedding of a quality management system across BMIHMS. This is resulting in changes to many policies and processes and is encouraging greater communication across BMIHMS.

The Panel was pleased to observe the high regard which industry has for BMIHMS, and a history of industry partnerships which have strengthened over a number of years. Alumni too spoke enthusiastically about their time at BMIHMS, and that the quality of teaching and the student experience at BMIHMS had provided them with a strong theoretical and practical background as they embarked on their varied career paths. These graduates were proud to employ students from BMIHMS, when opportunities arose, and along with industry partners were pleased with the quality of student BMIHMS is producing.

Current students at BMIHMS spoke highly of their student experience and are to be acknowledged for their active Student Representative Council and for its contributions. The Panel also believes the role of campus services coordinator at both campuses is also working well in the provision of student support services, as is the provision of support provided by staff at both campus libraries.

In acknowledging that BMIHMS is part way through an extensive change process, the Panel believes that there are a number of areas which need a greater depth of consideration, and these include the BMIHMS academic governance framework and the need to ensure the overall sustainability and effectiveness of this present structure and the best use of external representation on boards and committees. A further area which the Panel believes needs consideration is the development of a culture of scholarship within BMIHMS, which builds on many of the present disparate teaching and learning and applied research activities which are at various stages of development. Finally, the Panel believes BMIHMS needs to give further consideration to the development of the BMIHMS quality management system (QMS). Whilst the Panel was able to see the beginnings of a QMS within BMIHMS, it is now important that BMIHMS further develop and embed this system across the organisation and strengthen staff understanding of quality.

Commendations

1. AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School for its strong alumni network and the high regard which many past students have for the School.....12
2. AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel School approach to the management of academic integrity.12
3. AUQA commends the strong links the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School has with industry, employers and the community and the depth of these linkages which have been sustained over a number of years.13
4. AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School community spirit developed on the foundation of positive student and staff interactions at both campuses.....16
5. AUQA commends library staff at the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School for the academic support services they provide to students.....17

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School adopt a systematic approach to the development of its alumni network.....12
2. AUQA affirms the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School’s leadership in the integration and standardisation of policies and processes across both campuses and encourages the accelerated implementation of these change processes.....14
3. AUQA affirms the Student Representative Council’s active participation in Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School at the Leura Campus.16
4. AUQA affirms the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School intention to improve its information technology infrastructure, the appointment of additional operational support and the migration to standardised operating platforms.17

Recommendations

1. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School review its recently implemented academic governance charter, structures and accountabilities to assess their effectiveness.9
2. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School build on and strengthen its internal academic teaching and learning capacity.11
3. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School continue to strengthen and systemise its student feedback processes.11
4. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School define and embed an approach to scholarship.....13

5. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School develop a set of graduate attributes to enhance its understanding of teaching and learning.13
6. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School further develop a policy framework, process and accountability for the development, monitoring and review of all academic and operational policies.14
7. AUQA recommends that the resource management of Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School be integrated within the overall approach to academic governance.15
8. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School ensure staff qualifications are at the correct levels.15
9. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School continue to monitor staff workloads to ensure an appropriate balance between preparation and scholarship and research.16
10. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School define more clearly and implement a quality management system.18
11. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School embed an approach to continuous improvement.18
12. AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School develop and embed an approach to benchmarking into its quality management system.19

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

‘Both the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (Leura) and the Australian International Hotel School are situated in major Australian tourist destinations, are international residential hospitality and tourism schools, and operate with predominantly full-time students within a simulated or working hotel environment.’ (PF p10) The Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS) and the Australian International Hotel School (AIHS) mission, vision, motto and values are elaborated in Appendix A of this Report along with details of the history of the schools.

In order to provide a context to this audit it is important to note that in November 2008 Laureate Education Inc. purchased both BMIHMS and AIHS. ‘Laureate Education Inc. currently has 43 tertiary institutions worldwide, with over 500,000 students enrolled in disciplines including medicine, business, law, education, and social sciences. Within Laureate Education Inc, BMIHMS (and AIHS) are members of the Laureate Hospitality Education group’ (PF p10).

1.1 *Institutional and Educational Objectives*

BMIHMS educational philosophy, known as the Three Pillar Approach, ‘prepares students with sound applied skills, theoretical knowledge and most importantly individual personal and professional growth’ (PF p10).

BMIHMS educational objectives are:

- to deliver outstanding tourism and hospitality education with continuous improvement through international and domestic benchmarking
- to enable students to develop as strategic, ethical, community-engaged industry leaders informed by scholarship and research.

These educational objectives underpin many of the changes at BMIHMS including the developing approach to academic governance and scholarship.

BMIHMS operates from two campuses. In the Blue Mountains, the Leura Campus has 407 equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL), three current programs and student accommodation. The Canberra Campus, which is co-located with the Hotel Kurrajong, which operates as a training hotel for students, has 141 EFTSL, delivers seven current programs and has student accommodation. In the new management structure the Canberra Campus is no longer run as a separate entity but increasingly policies and processes are being standardised and consolidated across both campuses, and staff from Canberra are being involved in business and academic decision-making processes. The AIHS has in recent years had a significant staff turnover and the Panel was advised that since the change of ownership and the new integrated approach to the management of BMIHMS, incorporating AIHS, staff retention at AIHS has begun to stabilise. It appears that the AIHS has made some recent solid senior leadership appointments, and is developing practical academic and organisational support structures. BMIHMS also acknowledges that enrolments at the AIHS are low, and there is a present focus on improvement to underpin future growth. At this stage it is intended that the Leura Campus will maintain its present capacity and the Canberra Campus will grow and possibly target a postgraduate market. BMIHMS also has an administrative head office in Crows Nest in Sydney,

where the CEO and the Finance and Marketing areas of the operation are situated. The CEO and senior staff travel between both campuses and the Sydney office.

Since the Laureate Education Inc purchase in late 2008, BMIHMS has begun to adopt 'Laureate best practice' approaches from within the Laureate network and there is a stronger focus on business practices, marketing and planning. A shared services model is developing to support both campuses and integrate and improve the processes to sustain future growth. The Laureate network believes that Australia is a good educational destination as it is very attractive to European students and is close to Asia.

The potential for BMIHMS in participating with the Laureate network is excellent, particularly with regards to the possibility of future study abroad options for students, for staff teaching exchanges and for undertaking review and planning activities such as benchmarking. Some staff have also begun to take up online staff development opportunities with universities in the Laureate network. One of the current challenges and opportunities BMIHMS is considering different options and study loads to align with other institutes in the Laureate network, allowing for students to transfer to different campuses in different countries as they complete their study.

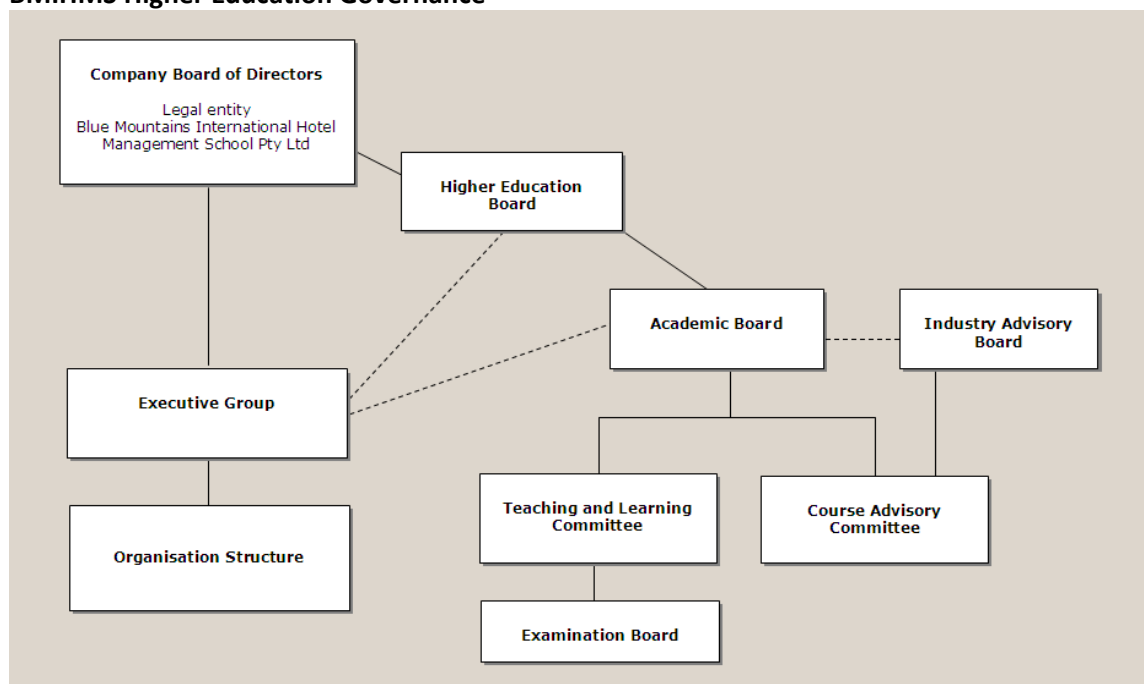
1.2 Institutional Governance

1.2.1 Academic Governance

Since its purchase by Laureate Education Inc in 2008 the BMIHMS has undertaken a review of its governance structure. This resulted in the production of a Governance Charter (SM001) and the implementation of a new academic governance structure. A number of boards and committees have been appointed and these have at most had one or two meetings since inception. As the academic governance structures are new many of the associated supporting governance processes and reporting structures are still being developed.

BMIHMS is governed by a Board of Directors, the majority of whom are offshore. The Board of Directors delegates authority to the Higher Education Board (HEB). HEB comprises six members, four members of this Board are external, one member is a director and one member is internal to BMIHMS. BMIHMS also has an Academic Board which '... operates independently of any directives of the ownership and management of BMIHMS to foster academic integrity' (PF p23). The Academic Board reports to the HEB. A number of committees report to the Academic Board, including the Industry Advisory Board, the Course Advisory Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee. The Executive Group reports to the Board of Directors and has a 'dotted line' reporting relationship to both the HEB and Academic Board.

BMIHMS Higher Education Governance



BMIHMS intent is that HEB oversee the strategic development of higher education and it is responsible for monitoring the academic and higher education operations of the School. In considering the next level of governance the Academic Board consists of six members, half of whom are external academics. It includes a member of the Student Representative Council, and both the BMIHMS Academic Affairs Director and Assistant Director. The academic dean positions (Leura and Canberra) are not members of Academic Board, but the Panel was advised that they have recently attended some meetings as observers. It is important to BMIHMS that the Academic Board is seen as independent to the management of the School, and this is because of an historical legacy in that the Board of Directors governed the School prior to the Laureate purchase. Due to the newness of the academic governance structures, no self reviews of board or committee activities have been undertaken as yet. HEB members advised in interviews that they had received a board induction to the activities of the Laureate network and BMIHMS, but they did not recall any other formal board induction.

It is apparent that HEB is only operating in a strategic or advisory capacity and does not appear to have exercised the academic management oversight of BMIHMS as indicated in its BMIHMS Governance Charter, Higher Education Board, Terms of Reference (SM001 p6). There is a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities and accountabilities of HEB and the Academic Board and this was demonstrated by participants in interviews. This is the case even at a fundamental level of academic governance responsibility, for example regarding the sign off and monitoring of the strategic business plan and responsibility for quality management. The Panel also has a number of concerns regarding the long term sustainability of the academic governance structures. Whilst the Panel acknowledges that BMIHMS is positioning itself for growth, the Panel believes that there are presently too many layers of boards and committees for the size of the organisation. Further work needs to be undertaken by BMIHMS to define a governance structure which is flexible and which provides the oversight, monitoring and accountability that is required of an effective academic governance function. BMIHMS also needs to consider the balance of the participation of external members in its governance structure, and to be certain that there is tangible evidence of a knowledge transfer occurring to staff at BMIHMS. For example, at present, the Panel does not believe that the Academic Board is providing a forum

for academic staff to discuss and monitor the academic quality of programs at BMIHMS, there is limited evidence of the transfer of any external knowledge and expertise through the academic governance structure to BMIHMS and this needs to be strengthened.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School review its recently implemented academic governance charter, structures and accountabilities to assess their effectiveness.

1.2.2 Strategic Planning

The majority of staff interviewed are aware of the BMIHMS Strategic Business Plan 2007–2010 and how the Plan operates. Some staff advised that they had recently taken part in an annual Strategic Planning Forum. The Plan is being monitored, and the Panel noted that, in general, prescribed activities and the designated accountabilities in the Plan need be tightened. It was also noted that many of the activities in the Plan were designated for completion in the months after the Audit Visit, so the Audit Panel could not consider how achievements against accountabilities were monitored and reviewed. BMIHMS is reporting financial key performance indicators and enrolments at its Executive Group. The integration of business systems should aid in the development of a suite of financial and non-financial performance indicators to support the monitoring of the BMIHMS Strategic Business Plan.

2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

BMIHMS's approach to teaching and learning is slowly being redefined. BMIHMS is embarking upon an integrated approach to teaching and learning across the two schools. An academic dean at each campus oversees the day-to-day management of academic activities and these positions work closely with the Director of Academic Affairs.

2.1 Teaching and Learning

2.1.1 Strategic Partnership Agreement

BMIHMS has had a strategic partnership agreement with the University of Queensland (UQ) since November 2006. The agreement states that the 'UQ School of Tourism shall provide a quality assurance endorsement of the bachelor of business degree owned and delivered by BMIHMS at its Leura/and or ACT campuses.' This agreement establishes articulation pathways into UQ programs, an external moderation function of BMIHMS programs, academic mentoring, membership of academic governing committees and the beginnings of some combined research activity. UQ advised that:

UQ School of Tourism is directly involved in quality assurance with the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS). A senior member of the School of Tourism staff moderates and audits all assessment items at the BMIHMS by reviewing assessment pieces, moderating marks, overseeing the distribution of grades and assuring consistency of results. This process aims to ensure the standards at BMIHMS are comparable with those at UQ. Staff from the School of Tourism also run training seminars at the BMIHMS on assessment philosophy, procedures and techniques as well as research training seminars. Staff from both institutions are currently involved in a number of joint applied research projects.

One staff member of the School of Tourism has also been contracted to act as Consultant Dean to BMIHMS to provide ongoing assistance and advice on the management and running of the Hotel School. This member also teaches into some of the programs at BMIHMS.

(Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Queensland, January 2010)

The external moderation of BMIHMS programs by UQ currently appears to be working well as is the academic mentoring and this, the Panel was advised, has been instrumental in improving academic capacity. The Panel noted that some of the comments of the moderator are repetitious and that there needs to be a feedback mechanism built in for BMIHMS to address comments within the formal academic governance reporting process.

UQ has also agreed that BMIHMS may include the statement "this degree has been quality endorsed by the University of Queensland" on the degree testamur. The Panel is concerned that this form of quality endorsement has the potential to cause confusion in the market place.

2.1.2 Capacity-building

As a number of the members of Academic Board are external academics to BMIHMS there was no evidence that skill in the development of the quality of academic programs was actually

being developed internally. The Panel did not find any strong evidence of academic inquiry being encouraged because of this extended use of externals on all major teaching and learning committees. The Audit Panel believes that BMIHMS appears to be delegating responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning to external academics, and the accountabilities of external representatives involved in the academic governance structures are unclear. For example, when the Panel asked members of Academic Board why the Teaching and Learning Plan was still in draft form, the Panel was advised that the Plan had yet to be scrutinised by academics from the UQ who work with BMIHMS. There needs to be a much stronger internal depth and ownership of academic teaching and learning and research within BMIHMS, and this capacity needs to be developed and nurtured internally within the academic activities of the schools.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School build on and strengthen its internal academic teaching and learning capacity.

2.1.3 Awarding of Degrees and Testamurs

According to testamurs considered by the Audit Panel, HEB is awarding the BMIHMS testamur. Ultimately, responsibility for the awarding of testamurs resides with the governing body of BMIHMS and not the HEB as it is only a delegated authority. Further, the description on testamurs states that 'This award has been quality endorsed by the University of Queensland Australia.' The University of Queensland advised that it supports the continued inclusion of this text on BMIHMS testamurs for the duration of its current strategic partnership agreement.

2.1.4 Student Evaluation

BMIHMS was able to provide evidence that student evaluations are occurring and contributing to improvements. Student evaluation surveys have been developed and are being used at each campus as continuous improvement tools. It is now important that BMIHMS strengthen and systemise these student evaluation processes. Some of the evaluations the Panel saw at AIHS involved small student cohorts and gave meaningless quantitative and negligible qualitative information. BMIHMS needs to consider other forms of student feedback to monitor the quality of the student experience. The Panel was advised that student feedback is monitored and provided to staff through the academic dean position at each campus. The Panel also noted, from data provided, that some staff had received low ratings. In these cases the individual teaching staff worked with the academic dean to address performance issues.

BMIHMS has been involved in the International Students Barometer over the last three years. While there is a high awareness of this survey amongst all staff, there was limited evidence on how this survey feeds back into BMIHMS continuous improvement processes. It is important that the School use the information from this instrument to systematically feed back into its continuous improvement activities.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School continue to strengthen and systemise its student feedback processes.

2.1.5 Alumni

BMIHMS has a strong alumni group which has been supported over a number of years by an Alumni Manager who is a former executive of the School and who has made personal contact with alumni, and sustained alumni activity, over a number of years. The BMIHMS alumni network is global and the alumni network and industry engagement activity is a credit to BMIHMS as are the strong ties and high regard and affection many past students have for the School and of the time they spent there as a student.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School for its strong alumni network and the high regard which many past students have for the School.

As with many activities at BMIHMS, the alumni network is now at a stage where it needs to be more systematically managed. BMIHMS also acknowledges the need for a succession plan for the future management of alumni. The Panel also believes that the alumni network is an underutilised resource of the School in terms of its brand equity because, as mentioned above, many of the School's graduates are proud of their connection to BMIHMS.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School adopt a systematic approach to the development of its alumni network.

2.1.6 Academic Integrity

BMIHMS has been using the Turnitin software package for the last four years and students are aware of this tool in the management of academic integrity, in particular plagiarism. All students are provided with advice on plagiarism when they commence their studies at the School. BMIHMS has found that in the first term of study plagiarism can be an issue and in some cases students from different cultural backgrounds have to learn that some behaviours are unacceptable. Academic and library staff work with students and assist them in understanding referencing and after this first term plagiarism is usually minimal. Where plagiarism is an issue BMIHMS has processes in place to manage and document each case.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel School approach to the management of academic integrity.

2.1.7 Industry and Community Engagement

The Panel was impressed with the members of the Industry Advisory Board and the industry representatives that were interviewed and the depth of commitment that these groups demonstrate for working with BMIHMS to continuously improve the quality of the student internships and graduating student cohorts. This commitment had often been sustained over a number of years. Both campuses are also involved in their local tourism and hospitality communities and students participate in a number of functions throughout the year. In all cases the students contributions are held in high regard. BMIHMS is to be commended for the very strong links the School, staff and students have with industry and with the manner in which these industry linkages are utilised for the benefit of both students and the industry.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends the strong links the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School has with industry, employers and the community and the depth of these linkages which have been sustained over a number of years.

2.2 Scholarship and Creative Activity

2.2.1 Developing a Culture of Scholarship

The Panel believes that BMIHMS needs to focus attention on the development of a culture of scholarship. BMIHMS needs to understand how activities in teaching and learning and applied research and its strong industry linkages are ideally contributing to, and developing scholarship at BMIHMS which enhances the quality of graduates. Whilst the Panel found pockets of activity which contribute to a culture of scholarship such as the developing academic support provided to individual teachers by the academic dean's at each campus, the strong external moderation practices with UQ, the developing student feedback tools, and the extensive use of guest lecturers from industry, there is as yet no depth of understanding of how these elements could combine and contribute to the BMIHMS culture of scholarship. Some BMIHMS staff have recently engaged in a number of small joint applied research projects with staff at the UQ, funded through a small research grant process. It is not clear to what end these applied research projects are being pursued or how they will inform and contribute to scholarship. BMIHMS needs to consider the spectrum across all of its teaching and learning and applied research and industry based activities and how together these all contribute to further defining scholarship at BMIHMS.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School define and embed an approach to scholarship.

2.2.2 Adult Learning Environment

The Panel was confused by the BMIHMS Portfolio's stress on providing an adult learning environment for students, particularly as BMIHMS' prime market segment are school leavers. Furthermore, students are required to wear a uniform, and a roll is marked. Prior to becoming a HEP, BMIHMS offered programs at a vocational education level. Therefore, one explanation for this contradiction in the academic learning environment could be that the School is still in transition from being a vocational provider as it establishes itself as a HEP. BMIHMS needs to define its desired academic learning environment for students and ensure that this supports the needs of the cohorts of students attending the schools. This learning environment should be informed by the BMIHMS culture of scholarship. The development of BMIHMS graduate attributes may assist the School in further articulating its unique approach to applied learning.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School develop a set of graduate attributes to enhance its understanding of teaching and learning.

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

BMIHMS has a two-pronged approach to its business. Academic activities are managed under the auspices of the academic governance structures and the administration of BMIHMS is delegated by the Board of Directors to the Executive Group. There is no clear delineation of how these two components of the organisation work together and accountabilities need to be clarified at a number of levels of operation.

3.1 *Organisational Structures and Decision Making*

3.1.1 Integration and Consolidation

The key organisational structural consideration which is of immediate importance to BMIHMS is the integration and consolidation of the two campuses and the move towards the standardisations of policies and processes. This consolidation is still at an early stage. The Campus Director of Canberra is a member of the Executive Group, and other integration activities are beginning to occur, with staff workshops and fora now being held in Canberra. Also, staff from the Canberra Campus are spending time with their Leura Campus colleagues and are involved in activities such as the recent Strategic Planning Forum. A moderation process is also undertaken by unit directors in programs or courses taught across both schools. The Panel believes that it is important that BMIHMS continue to lead this change process and to accelerate the alignment of activities at both campuses. The alignment of the academic processes between the two campuses should also encourage further discussions around what scholarship means at BMIHMS and allow for shared understandings to develop.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School's leadership in the integration and standardisation of policies and processes across both campuses and encourages the accelerated implementation of these change processes.

3.1.2 Policy Development

Many of the BMIHMS decision-making structures are dominated by the academic governance framework. Academic decisions and issues are fed up through the academic deans, through the Course Advisory Board, the Teaching and Learning Committee and/or the Director of Academic Affairs, to the Academic Board and then to the HEB. Issues and advice are communicated up to the Executive Group in a similar way. There is no consistent understanding amongst staff regarding how policy is developed at BMIHMS and this could be in part because of the 'newness' of the academic governance structures, which have not established processes for the approval and review of policy; or it could be because of the confusion in accountabilities between the Executive Group and/or the academic governance structures.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School further develop a policy framework, process and accountability for the development, monitoring and review of all academic and operational policies.

3.1.3 Linking Academic Management and Resources

The Panel also observed that the finance function of BMIHMS is operating separately from the academic business and it has recently developed its own five-year plan. Further, the Panel was advised that all financial decisions are made by the Executive Group. The HEB's terms of reference state that the functions of the Board include:

Monitoring the implementation of the School's strategic direction, business plan, risk management and annual budget and maintaining oversight of the operational and financial viability of the School. The Company Board is responsible for final approval of budget. (SM001 p6)

It was evident to the Panel that this is not occurring, and that the budget is monitored in part through the Strategic Business Plan and approved by the Executive Group and Board of Directors. BMIHMS needs to ensure that in considering the future academic activities and aspirations of the schools that there is a nexus between academic activities and resource management. At present, it appears that these activities are running in parallel and are not integrated. The role of the Executive Group within the academic governance structures of BMIHMS also needs to be given more consideration, particularly as it is responsible for the overall management of BMIHMS.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that the resource management of Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School be integrated within the overall approach to academic governance.

3.2 Academic and Administrative Staff

3.2.1 Staff Qualifications

The BMIHMS Portfolio states that 'Lecturers possess one AQF qualification level higher than the level of the course they teach or are currently undertaking advanced study.' (PF p21) Staff qualifications sighted by the Panel revealed that many staff are not yet at a level that satisfies this requirement. This is of particular concern in the teaching of the masters program. It is acknowledged that BMIHMS has taken steps to address this issue and many staff are undertaking further degrees, supported by the school, to obtain the correct level of qualification. It is also acknowledged that in many of the practical subjects BMIHMS offers that there is not a tradition of academic qualification. In these cases the school is providing adequate oversight of this more practically oriented teaching through the role of the academic dean on each campus. Further, consideration needs to be given to the correct level of staff qualifications in the appointment of all casual staff.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School ensure staff qualifications are at the correct levels.

The Panel also noted that in some cases particularly at AIHS, management staff are managing academic positions and activities. There do not appear to be any issues with this arrangement at present.

3.2.2 Developing Staff and Workloads

The Panel noted that staff receive induction when they commence at BMIHMS and there is evidence that new staff are mentored in their roles, or know whom to ask if they need assistance. Many staff at BMIHMS are undertaking or contemplating further staff development. It is important that there is an alignment between staff development and staff appraisal, and that together these contribute to a culture of scholarship. Further, once BMIHMS staff have completed professional development which has a pedagogical focus, BMIHMS will need to consider the types of professional development which will contribute to a culture of scholarship and the achievement of the BMIHMS educational objectives.

The Panel acknowledges the enthusiasm and experience of many of the staff teaching at BMIHMS on either a full time or a casual basis. The Panel is concerned, however, that at both campuses, some staff are teaching across far too wide a span of subjects given their areas of expertise and qualifications. BMIHMS also needs to consider staff workloads to ensure that there is adequate time for preparation for teaching. There is a tension between staff workloads and the professed commitment to developing a culture of scholarship from a position of applied research. In order to develop this approach to scholarship, staff need to be given time within their workloads to undertake research. This is presently not the case, with most staff undertaking research after hours. These are all issues which BMIHMS, HEB and the Academic Board will need to work through as they develop an approach to scholarship and applied research and define how each of these activities impacts on the other.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School continue to monitor staff workloads to ensure an appropriate balance between preparation and scholarship and research.

3.2.3 Support for Students

BMIHMS has recently appointed a campus services coordinator at each campus and this position appears to be working well in coordinating student support services at both sites. Students also commented positively regarding the services provided by these positions. As students are required to live on campus for two terms in Canberra and four terms in Leura this enables a community spirit to develop between staff and students. It often provides for a more individualised approach to students, as when students have issues they feel they can approach staff directly. Students are also able to access counsellors at both campuses, and at the Leura Campus students have a very active Student Representative Council which works with staff on issues relating to student support.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School community spirit developed on the foundation of positive student and staff interactions at both campuses.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms the Student Representative Council's active participation in Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School at the Leura Campus.

3.3 Information Resources

3.3.1 Library and Library Services

The library and library staff were complimented by students as excellent resources that students could go to and ask for assistance. The librarians at both campuses are held in high regard for the academic support services they provide to students.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends library staff at the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School for the academic support services they provide to students.

As it moves towards greater integration, one of the challenges for BMIHMS is the migration of the library collections into one shared database and to develop the lines of accountability between the two school libraries. It also needs to consider the overall management of the library collection over the two campuses, particularly in terms of future collection development. Further, comment was made that there is some difficulty with individual purchases as it is Laureate Hospitality Education group policy that purchase orders must be approved by the Laureate network offshore. As a result, purchasing sign offs can take time. The Panel advises BMIHMS to develop a more efficient form of managing library expenditure.

3.3.2 Information Technology

BMIHMS has come through a challenging time with its information technology infrastructure and a number of improvements are being made. At the Leura Campus students' main concerns are in regards to wireless internet access and the Campus is waiting on new hardware to improve the connectedness of the wireless system. There is also a need for a lower level 'help desk' support at the Canberra Campus. BMIHMS has further challenges in terms of the integration of campuses and the development of a library system and in aligning some of its databases and business data systems. Under the new ownership, BMIHMS appears to be adjusting and working towards a fuller integration of information technology in both an academic and business capacity. BMIHMS recently implemented SharePoint which is being used as an information repository, for both minutes of meetings and for student and course information. SharePoint is currently being reviewed, and it is anticipated that this will be the main academic activity tool used by staff and students. Students have been given a separate drive for student-based activities.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School intention to improve its information technology infrastructure, the appointment of additional operational support and the migration to standardised operating platforms.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

BMIHMS is defining an approach to quality management across both campuses. Whilst the beginnings of a quality management system (QMS) are emerging there is limited understanding amongst staff about a QMS and continuous improvement. There is a need for leadership and further development of the BMIHMS QMS.

4.1 *The Quality Management System*

BMIHMS has the beginnings of a QMS but further work needs to be undertaken to define and implement this system. Elements of a QMS are emerging in the approaches to strategic planning and monitoring and in the areas of student evaluation and feedback. Staff have little understanding of what is meant by quality, the QMS or continuous improvement at BMIHMS. Some staff believe that SharePoint is the BMIHMS QMS and some staff could not define quality assurance or systematic continuous improvement processes. Most staff equate quality management with the strategic business planning processes of BMIHMS and the feedback loops required in the monitoring of the Strategic Business Plan.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School define more clearly and implement a quality management system.

4.2 *Review and Evaluation*

The culture of continuous improvement as defined by review and evaluation is not strong at BMIHMS. One reason for this could be because of the implementation of so many changes since the change of ownership. BMIHMS has a Continuous Improvement Policy which is sparse and needs further development. Few staff are aware of this Policy, and the Panel was advised that responsibility for continuous improvement had recently relocated from the Compliance and Audit Committee to the Executive Group. The role of the internal audit function and activity is also not clear. Approaches to continuous improvement through internal audit need to be embedded into BMIHMS activities.

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School embed an approach to continuous improvement.

4.2.1 Benchmarking

Staff at BMIHMS have limited understanding of benchmarking and the application of benchmarking for improvement. Some staff discussed the International Student Barometer as a form of benchmarking but had difficulty in defining how this survey contributes towards continuous improvements in academic policies and processes. BMIHMS has a major opportunity in joining the Laureate network, in having access to international benchmarking partners, and staff are keen to pursue these relationships. More recently, BMIHMS is benefiting from the Laureate purchase, in that good practices from the Laureate Hospitality Education group are slowly beginning to be adopted by BMIHMS and this has seen a strong focus in the last six months in the development and improvement in financial and business systems and processes.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School develop and embed an approach to benchmarking into its quality management system.

4.3 *Planning and Managing for Quality*

The Panel is not convinced that BMIHMS is planning and managing for quality beyond its self-assessment and preparations for the AUQA audit. BMIHMS now has the beginnings of many of the elements of a QMS in place, and is continuing to consolidate processes and activities between the two schools. It is timely for BMIHMS to consider how to plan and manage quality, so that 'quality' moves beyond the responsibility of the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs, Quality Assurance and Accreditation and is embedded into all of the processes and activities of BMIHMS. Quality also needs to be considered and managed through the accountabilities and decisions of the Executive Group and through BMIHMS academic governance structures. BMIHMS also needs to begin to consider how it measures quality and its impact on the achievement of the School's educational objectives.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: BLUE MOUNTAINS INTERNATIONAL HOTEL MANAGEMENT SCHOOL AND THE AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL HOTEL SCHOOL

Mission

The School aims to be a global leader in hospitality and tourism education. Its graduates will be leaders of the future.

Vision (Educational Objectives 2008–2009)

- To deliver outstanding tourism and hospitality education with continuous improvement through international and domestic benchmarking.
- To enable students to develop as strategic, ethical, community-engaged industry leaders informed by scholarship and research.

Motto

“Who knows achieves”

Company Values

“Quality, Integrity, Aspiration”

Background

Founded in 1991, Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School Pty Limited (BMIHMS) opened the residential Leura Campus in the Blue Mountains delivering vocational hospitality management courses.

The residential campus of BMIHMS accommodates over 240 students in the on-campus hotel. As a simulated working hotel, campus facilities include fine dining restaurant, bistro and cafe, twin hotel rooms, kitchens and front office in addition to lecture and seminar rooms.

In 1998 in partnership with Bournemouth University, UK, the School delivered its first degree, Bachelor of Arts in International Hospitality and Tourism Management. The University of New England replaced Bournemouth University in this partnership in 2001 with an initial five-year agreement for the delivery of units towards a Bachelor of Commerce (Hospitality and Tourism Management). This agreement was phased out in July 2009.

In 2002 the School was accredited to introduce its own postgraduate courses, a one-year Graduate Certificate in Hospitality and Tourism Management and an 18-month Graduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

In 2005 the School was approved as a higher education provider and gained accreditation through the New South Wales (NSW) Higher Education Directorate for its one-year Diploma of Food and Beverage Management and a two-year Associate Degree in Hotel and Resort Management. The Associate Degree was first offered to students in 2006 in place of the vocational advanced diploma award.

In 2005 BMIHMS acquired the Australian International Hotel School (AIHS) in Canberra. AIHS was originally opened in 1995 by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government as a boutique hotel and a hotel management college situated at the historic Hotel Kurrajong. Originally affiliated with the School

of Hotel Administration at Cornell University (CSHA) in the USA, AIHS offered the Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management) designed by CSHA. The CSHA affiliation ended in December 2001 with a new agreement signed with the Faculty of Business at RMIT University for the Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management) awarded jointly by AIHS and RMIT University. The RMIT University agreement has been phased out in 2009.

AIHS became a 'campus' of BMIHMS, adopting a similar teaching methodology and educational ethos whilst retaining its own brand. BMIHMS gained accreditation in the ACT for all its higher education courses (associate degree, graduate certificate and diploma).

The Hotel Kurrajong, Canberra is a 26 bedroom boutique hotel located alongside the AIHS residential campus thereby providing a unique environment in which students are offered a combination of theoretical and practical classes set in a 'real life' hotel laboratory.

2006 saw the development of a significant strategic partnership, drawn up between BMIHMS and the School of Tourism at the University of Queensland for the latter to provide moderation, benchmarking and professional development opportunities including research and other scholarly activities. This strategic partnership has seen the movement of academic staff between the University and the School both in teaching and research, together with the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

In 2007 BMIHMS gained accreditation in the ACT for a Master of Hotel Management (Gastronomy) and Master of Hotel Management (offered in February 2008) and an Associate Degree of Tourism Management (currently dormant) in both the ACT and NSW.

2008 saw the accreditation of a suite of three bachelor of business courses with nested awards of the Diploma of Business and the Associate Degree of Business in the ACT and NSW. These were introduced in 2009 and have become the main undergraduate program for both AIHS and BMIHMS.

In November 2008, the founding directors of the School sold their shares in BMIHMS to Laureate Education Inc. Laureate Education Inc currently have 43 tertiary/university institutions worldwide with over 500,000 students enrolled in disciplines including medicine, business, law, education and social sciences. Within Laureate Education Inc, BMIHMS is a member of the Laureate Hospitality Education group, consisting of worldwide hotel schools and including three of the leading hotel schools.

Characteristics of BMIHMS

Both the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (Leura) and the Australian International Hotel School (Canberra) are situated in major Australian tourist destinations, are international residential hospitality and tourism schools, and operate with predominately full-time students within a simulated or working hotel environment.

The School's educational philosophy is adapted from the traditional Swiss hotel school model, first developed at the Lausanne Hotel School, Switzerland, which has become known as the Three Pillar Approach – Educational Philosophy. This approach, embedded throughout the residential campus, is intended to prepare students with sound applied skills, theoretical knowledge and individual personal and professional growth.

All of BMIHMS's courses include an industry practicum component to develop critical thinking through research and practice. The Career Development department has full-time staff responsible for matching each student's skill levels, personality and preferences to the appropriate industry position. Students are guided, assisted and mentored throughout their industry practicum placements and for final year students the Graduate Privileged Partners program introduces suitable students to a group of potential employers.

The implementation of the Three Pillar Approach together with BMIHMS's strong industry links supports the School's commitment to educate its graduates to be forward-thinking hospitality professionals.

BMIHMS Alumni Association maintains contact with the majority of its 2500 graduates around the globe through the Alumni website (www.bmsalumni.com.au) which provides networking and career opportunities, events and news for graduates.

Student Enrolment Data

COURSE	2009 EFTSL BMIHMS	2009 EFTSL AIHS
Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management)		11
Graduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management		5
Masters in Hotel Management		48
Bachelor of Business (International Event Management)		8
Bachelor of Business (International Hotel Management)		66
Bachelor of Business (International Hotel and Resort Management)	404	2
Associate Degree of Business (International Hotel and Resort Management)	2	
Associate Degree of Business (International Hotel Management)		1
Diploma of Business (International Hotel and Resort Management)	1	
TOTAL	407	141

Source: BMIHMS data collections October 2009

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

Mission

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

Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

Vision

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

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

Values

In its external relations, AUQA will be:

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Professor Margaret Jackson, Director, MBA Programs, Graduate School of Business,
RMIT University, (Chair)

Karen Treloar, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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

ACT.....	Australian Capital Territory
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AIHS	Australian International Hotel School
BMIHMS.....	Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School
CSHA	School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL.....	equivalent full-time student load
FEE-HELP	FEE-HELP is a loan given to eligible fee-paying students to help pay part or all of their tuition fees.
HEB	Higher Education Board
HEP(s).....	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now disbanded)
National Protocols	<i>National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
NSW	New South Wales
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
QAFs.....	Quality Audit Factors
QMS	Quality Management System
UQ.....	University of Queensland

