

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
Bond University

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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2004, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of Bond University.

This Report of the audit provides an overview, and then details the Audit Panel's findings, recommendations, affirmations and commendations. A brief introduction to Bond University (Bond, or BU) is given in Appendix A; the objectives of AUQA are shown in Appendix B; and membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C. Appendix D defines abbreviations used in this Report.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits on each organisation's own objectives, together with the MCEETYA National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/mceetya_cop.htm). The major aim of the audit is to consider and review the procedures an organisation has in place to monitor and achieve its objectives. Full details of the AUQA audit process are available in the AUQA Audit Manual (<http://www.auqa.edu.au>).

On 12 July 2004, Bond presented its Performance Portfolio to AUQA. This comprised a main document along with about 70 supporting documents, describing the range of mechanisms the University has in place or is establishing to assure and enhance quality across its activities. Bond helpfully provided most of this material on a CD, and AUQA was able to index it for ease of use by Audit Panel members. The Audit Panel met for a day (13 August 2004) to consider these materials and plan its further actions.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and the Executive Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to Bond's Gold Coast campus on 30 August. This allowed the Panel to clarify issues, to request further documentary evidence, and to make arrangements for the Audit Visit to Bond by the whole Panel.

During this Preparatory Visit, Bond's international operations were discussed. In partnership with a Japanese company (Business Breakthrough Technology, BBT), Bond offers an MBA by distance learning for Japanese students. It also offers several courses in South Africa through a local private institution, Bond South Africa, by virtue of a licence and assignment agreement (now terminated) between Bond University (Australia) and ADvTECH Education Pty Ltd. Neither of these operations was visited by the Audit Panel although the whole Panel held a teleconference with BBT during the Audit Visit. These operations are discussed in Chapter 8.

Following the Preparatory Visit, Bond supplied more information requested by the Panel, and provided access for the Panel to its intranet.

The Audit Visit by the whole Audit Panel to Bond University in Robina took place over the period 10 to 13 October. The Panel appreciated the courteous support and attention provided to it by the University.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with about 200 people during the Audit Visit, including senior managers, academic, administrative and technical staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, members of the University Council, and community members. A session was also provided for any member of the Bond community to meet the Audit Panel and two people took advantage of this opportunity. During one session, Panel members walked around the campus and spoke to staff and students at random about various aspects of their experiences at Bond.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the audit visit, which ended on 13 October 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 Bond as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of Bond's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of findings together with lists of commendations 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 unsuitable approach, a faulty deployment, or a lack of success in relation to a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. They indicate matters in need of attention, possibly with suggestions for action. Where such matters have already been identified, with evidence, by Bond University, they are termed 'affirmations'.

It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA Audit Reports may have resource implications, and that this can pose difficulties for institutions. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise these recommendations, and recognises that it is the responsibility of the University to respond in a manner consistent with its local context.

The structure of this Audit Report broadly follows that of Bond's Performance Portfolio.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Introduction to Findings

Nature and Governance of Bond University

Bond is a mainly privately funded university, with a student population less than that of many faculties within other Australian universities. This permits many of the essential management and administration systems and processes to be relatively minimal and informal. Staff from different areas are more able to interact directly with each other than at a larger institution, and for so long as Bond remains relatively small it may be able to continue to operate with its current level of informality and a low level of formal documentation.

There are five faculties, which until recently were called schools, but there are no faculty boards. They continue to act rather like schools (but spanning a wide range of disciplines). The Academic Senate carries out functions of both an academic board and a faculty board.

Despite Bond's small size, there has been a high level of devolution, accompanied by a high degree of variability in programs and processes. Some of this variability is inappropriate, as Bond has identified for itself, in areas such as student support and community relations.

Bond is established as a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. Thus it has a Board of Directors, which operates also as the Council of the University. The Council appears to be working effectively, but this Report contains some recommendations about the need to ensure more effective academic input into activities at the level of governance.

Bond has since its creation been almost entirely dependent on student fees. This has meant a high level of attention to admissions, with a national admissions network, links to targeted schools, and a large number of overseas agents. Faculties have defined accountabilities for meeting agreed financial targets. Although the faculties work well together, their devolved fee revenue accountabilities could well be one of the factors leading to the variability mentioned above.

Bond has committed itself to a policy of a low volume of high quality students. Its plans for expansion are modest, with a projected increase from a current 2,800 enrolments to 4,000 by 2010.

Planning and Oversight

Bond has made extensive use of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) to express its Strategic Plan. This has worked well. More recently, it has looked to reflect this at all levels of the University, but with this heavy reliance on the BSC, small units (in an already small institution) may get bogged down in writing and reporting on detailed Action Plans.

Reviews have been carried out from time to time in a largely ad hoc manner, and there would be value in making this process more systematic. Reviews investigated by the Audit Panel were mixed in respect of the extent of action that had followed the review. In 2003, there was a major Self-Review in preparation for the AUQA audit. Through this means, the University learned a great deal about itself, and it generated a large number of actions. The Audit Panel strongly urges that these be carefully considered and prioritised, as it is unlikely that Bond will be able to implement them all in the short term.

Bond is conscious that it is different from other Australian universities. Specifically it sees itself more in the USA mould. Despite this, and despite a good deal of reference to benchmarking, it engages in little active comparison with any US institution.

Core Curriculum and Graduate Attributes

Bond University has set out to offer a distinctive student experience, and to generate 'the Bond graduate'. It therefore devised a Core Curriculum of compulsory courses for all students that cover topics in areas such as planning, values, computing and communication. It now requires students to take courses in these areas from a small number of electives. Bond has also specified explicit graduate attributes which relate to the Core Curriculum and are intended to contribute to the attainment of this desired distinctive graduate. Bond has begun a focused project of generalising this attention to the graduate attributes by working to embed them across all its courses.

Students and Alumni

As a private university in a national system where almost all higher education students are in public sector institutions, Bond has concentrated on attracting students through a combination of scholarships, accelerated study options (three semesters per year), small classes, a reputation for good teaching, an emphasis on community relationships, flexible and high quality student support, assisting its graduates into employment, the benefits of a small community, and high levels of engagement with its alumni.

From its inception, Bond has aimed for a low student/staff ratio (SSR), and quotes it as being about 10:1. However, because of the three-semester year, students would more likely be counted as 1.5 EFTSU in the public system, and it seems that this would be a more reasonable conversion factor (while accepting that SSRs are susceptible to many vagaries, so should not be treated as if they were precise).

The Bond student population is also different from that of other Australian universities, with over 50% international students and a large number of study abroad students who come for one semester. The student community is harmonious, and Bond has outstanding relations with its students. This translates into the existence of loyal alumni. Bond also puts a great deal of effort into maintaining alumni links and involving them in University activities.

Boyer's Scholarships

Bond has pockets of top-level research activity, and satisfies the MCEETYA Protocol 1 definition of a university, but does not aspire to be a 'research-led' university. Instead, it has committed itself to the whole of Boyer's four scholarships, but with particular attention given to the scholarships of teaching and application, and less emphasis on the scholarships of integration and discovery. It has identified a number of centres for concentrating on various activities, including research, consulting and policy development.

At present, there is a relatively small number of higher degree by research students, and the Audit Panel identified a need for more formal training for supervisors as the numbers grow. There is also a need to clarify the difference between coursework masters and undergraduate work in some cases.

Staff Services

The budgeting and finance areas work well and impressively support Bond's academic endeavours. One of the areas that has been highly devolved and flexible is human resources (HR). Bond is just moving to strengthen the central HR function

Internationalisation

With its high proportion of international students, Bond is well-placed to develop a more explicit and formal statement of its internationalisation objectives. Currently, it has only one overseas program, with another just ceasing. Bond is advised to look carefully at any future such international operations before embarking on them.

A summary of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations follows. These are not prioritised by the Audit Panel, and are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

Areas where AUQA commends Bond University's practices are as follows:

1. AUQA commends Bond University's faculty and operational unit procedures manuals and handbooks.12
2. AUQA commends the Vice-Chancellor of Bond University for encouraging an organisational culture that fosters openness to discussion and high levels of interaction within the Bond community12
3. AUQA commends Bond University's use of the Balanced Scorecard as a systematic way of implementing the strategic plan and ensuring that the desired range of activities are included within the scope of the quality management system.....15
4. AUQA commends Bond University for achieving its goal of maintaining a low student/staff ratio and small tutorial class sizes.....20
5. AUQA commends Bond University for the high level of satisfaction expressed by students in the staff and the teaching.21
6. AUQA commends Bond University for addressing its goal of being client-focused by offering students the standard option of a three-semester year.....21
7. AUQA commends Bond University for the effective implementation of a Core Curriculum of courses for all undergraduate students, which assists in the development of graduate attributes.....22
8. AUQA commends Bond University's decision to adopt Boyer's four scholarships as its organising principle for teaching and research, and for clearly specifying the priority afforded to each of the scholarships, and through these actions to differentiate its mission from other Australian universities.....26
9. AUQA commends Bond University for the outstanding relations it has developed and maintains with its students.31
10. AUQA commends Bond University for the way it mobilises and maintains contact with its alumni.31
11. AUQA commends Bond University for the quality of its IT support for students.35
12. AUQA commends the Bond University Library for its effective support of the University's academic activities through planning, training, co-ordination, and its links with the wider library community.....35

Affirmations

Areas where AUQA affirms Bond University's identification of the need for improvements are as follows:

1. AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to introduce and implement systematic and effective cyclic review schedules for faculties and programs.....18

2. AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to enhance its processes for the approval and monitoring of academic programs.....19

3. AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to review its processes for assessment, including moderation and benchmarking, so that it is better able to make unequivocal statements about graduate standards.23

4. AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to clarify its policies and procedures in relation to centres, including nomenclature, processes for creation, monitoring and closure, and the extent to which a centre is related to the University.27

5. AUQA affirms Bond University’s decision to strengthen the central human resource function in staff recruitment, induction, development and promotion.34

Recommendations

Areas where AUQA recommends improvements to the practices of Bond University are as follows:

1. AUQA recommends that the specification of membership of the Bond University Council be amended to require that there be at least one councillor, in addition to the Vice-Chancellor, who has substantial experience as a senior academic in Australia or a comparable higher education system.9

2. AUQA recommends that Bond University ensure that its governance and management processes enable academic representatives to play a substantive role in the academic affairs of the University, and in recommending to Council on significant academic initiatives.....11

3. AUQA recommends that Bond University’s faculty processes be made more consistent across the University, following identification of where the best practices lie, and that the remaining differences be explicitly justified by reference to academic or organisational advantage.....11

4. AUQA recommends that Bond University ensure the continuation and effectiveness of the quality system structures, including the Quality Task Force, the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) and the quality representatives.15

5. AUQA recommends that Bond University reflect on what it wishes to achieve from the Balanced Scorecard in the longer term, with a view to setting realistic aspirations and cascading it down only to areas that are large or complex enough for it to be cost-effective.....16

6. AUQA recommends that Bond University specify with more precision and a consistent level of detail the actions that result from the outworking of the Balanced Scorecard, so that performance over time can be monitored more readily.16

7. AUQA recommends that Bond University revisit the large number of proposed actions that arose from the Self-Review, in order to ensure that they are prioritised and that the high priority ones have the best possible chance of achievement.17

8. AUQA recommends that the Council and the Vice-Chancellor of Bond University give priority to establishing a peer group of institutions for the purposes of strategic and performance benchmarking at institutional and program levels.18

9. AUQA recommends that if Bond University makes public statements about its student/staff ratio (SSR), it do so by reference to standard definitions of SSR or explicitly say on each occasion that it calculates SSRs in a different way from public universities.20

10. AUQA recommends that Bond University review its student profile, including the balance between full-time and study abroad students, in the light of its academic and corporate goals; and the nature of the programs offered to study abroad students, in relation to content and academic standards.22
11. AUQA recommends that Bond University specify the requirements for masters by coursework programs in such a way that the distinction between those and any overlapping undergraduate programs is clear and academically justified.23
12. AUQA recommends that, as Bond University has chosen to use the four Boyer scholarships, it establish measures relating to each of the four scholarships that reflect Bond's own objectives in relation to each; and it adequately resource its activities in relation to each of them.....26
13. AUQA recommends that Bond University develop and implement a specific policy on the training of supervisors of research students.28
14. AUQA recommends that Bond University systematically collect and use statistics on retention and progress of students, reporting according to the categories of interest to the University.....30
15. AUQA recommends that Bond University take a more integrated approach to the provision of student services, and that those services introduce a more systematic process for evaluating their own performance.....36
16. AUQA recommends that Bond University develop principles to guide the development, management and monitoring of transnational programs and partnerships, including probity and due diligence procedures and the maintenance of consistent and appropriate admission standards, including English competency.41

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following objectives relevant to governance and management (PF p16):

1. *provide teaching, learning and research activities of the highest quality and develop new academic initiatives supported by high-quality facilities*
2. *continue controlled growth in student numbers, at levels that maximise the quality and value of its academic programs while enabling the University to meet its financial targets*
3. *ensure that its academic aims and aspirations are supported by effective client-focused management structures, policies, practices and systems*

The first objective is expressed in aspirational terms. Aspects of it are dealt with in the Chapters on teaching, research, support and resources. An overall observation is that Bond needs to be more precise in defining what 'highest quality' and 'high-quality facilities' mean so that it can set more specific objectives, and more precisely measure progress towards their achievement. A commitment to making more focused and evidence-based external comparisons (whether through benchmarking or other means) would be valuable in enabling Bond, over time, to monitor its performance in more objective terms.

In respect of the second objective, Bond has been successful in meeting its financial targets and is implementing a low-growth strategy so as to maintain its concentration on the quality of the student experience. The Audit Panel endorses this strategy. In respect of the third objective, Bond is successfully building good relationships with its students and its community. The relatively small size of the institution assists in this. An audit of all policies and their more public promulgation is well advanced.

1.1 Governance

1.1.1 Bond University Limited

Unlike most other Australian universities (but like Australian Catholic University) Bond is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, established pursuant to a Constitution (previously the Memorandum and Articles of Association). It is separately recognised by an Act of the Queensland Parliament, the *Bond University Act 1987*. In corporate terms, it has a set of Members whose actions are governed by the provisions of the Corporations Act. The Members appoint a Board, which functions as the Council of the University. Until recently, the Members and Council comprised essentially the same small group. From a governance perspective, this was problematic as it lacked the balance provided by having different groups exercising distinct roles, and ran the risk of leaving the very existence of the University susceptible to the decisions of a small number of people.

Therefore, over the period 2001-2003 the governance system was reviewed and revised. The Bond Company now has 30 Members including 12 alumni and six staff who (it may be assumed) are strongly committed to the continuation of the University. This review was essential and timely. It provides Bond with greater continuity and a properly constituted Membership to safeguard the long-term interests of the University.

As the restructure is so recent, it is not yet possible to discern the level of influence that the Members may have on the University. In contrast to the Council which meets frequently, the Members meet only annually. It would appear therefore that, unless exceptional circumstances arise, the Members are unlikely to do more than receive reports and make general comments.

1.1.2 Council Membership

The Council has nine members including the Vice-Chancellor (VC) ex officio, with the Registrar as Secretary. (At the time of the Audit Visit, two positions were vacant.) Council has recently developed a specified set of skills it needs among its membership, and the characteristics it sees as necessary for individual members to possess. Council has a Nominations Advisory Committee charged with the responsibility of finding candidates that match these specifications. The Members are responsible for making appointments to Council on the advice of Council.

The skill set includes “education”. The Audit Panel believes this should be changed to “higher education”, because to be fully effective Council needs to have ready access to the academic (and the student) voice, and to appreciate the academic culture and its traditions in order to deal with the range of issues confronting a higher education institution. While the Council does not need to become immersed in the details of academic activity, it does need to understand the nature of the university as an academic enterprise. The Audit Panel noted that the Nominations Advisory Committee is “encouraged” to propose staff members or alumni “provided they are equal to or better than other competing candidates”. Since the Academic Senate does not have determinative powers (see next section), and the Members (who do include staff and students) have only a limited constitutional role, it is essential that the Council have at least one member (other than the VC) with substantial experience of higher education. Therefore, although this ‘encouragement’ in the Nominations Advisory Committee’s specifications is very important, it would be better if it were mandated, so as to **ensure** that the necessary expertise is present within the Council. (The Panel noted that, at this time, the Council does not have anyone who fits this specification.)

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that the specification of membership of the Bond University Council be amended to require that there be at least one councillor, in addition to the Vice-Chancellor, who has substantial experience as a senior academic in Australia or a comparable higher education system.

Such a person need not necessarily be a current or former staff member of Bond itself.

A separate but related matter concerns the opportunities for an effective student voice to be heard by Council. The Panel was pleased to learn of the high level of interaction that occurs between the Chancellor/Council, the Vice-Chancellor and representatives of students. There are also student representatives on the Academic Senate. While noting that other Australian universities include students as members of their governing bodies, the Panel considered that it was essentially a matter for Bond to determine how student views and perspectives are adequately made known to the Council. If the Council does not consider student membership is appropriate, it is nevertheless important that the Council should ensure that it informs itself, and takes proper account, of the views of students.

Council should formally document and give effect to the manner in which it will ensure that the student perspective on issues of direct concern to students is adequately taken into account as part of the governance process.

1.1.3 Council Operations

With such a small Council, it is essential that all members are active and effective participants. Current councillors received a package of documents, and the formalisation of an induction processes for all incoming councillors would be beneficial, with the documentations package being developed into a governance manual.

Over the last couple of years, Council has become more active in the operation of the University. It was involved in the 2003 self-review (section 2.3) leading to the audit portfolio. One outcome of the review was the recognition of the need to develop “an effective and efficient approach to Central Policy Management that ensures consistency, and availability and accessibility [of policies] to staff and students” (PF p30). By the time of the Audit Visit, the Quality Task Force (section 2.1) had implemented an external audit of BU’s policies, and carried out an extensive re-development and/or categorisation of policies. This process, which arose from staff feedback that policies were unknown and/or unimplemented, is continuing. The Panel endorses this initiative, as it will enable internal practices to become better embedded in a more coherent policy structure. This is a positive result flowing from Bond’s own self-review process.

The policy framework operates as follows. The Quality Task Force (section 2.1) develops policies, the VC approves them (by delegated authority from the Council), and they are put on the web. The Council monitors policies and processes and their effects on the students and community.

The Council has undertaken one self-evaluation of its own performance. This could usefully become a regular process, perhaps matching the three-year terms of its members, with less formal reviews being held annually.

In an institution where so much of the operational and academic management is devolved to the VC, it is vital that the governing body has effective mechanisms for ensuring it receives adequate levels of reporting to enable it to undertake its accountabilities. The Panel found some measures being taken in this area, eg the action plan reports. The Panel formed the view that a more complete and systematic accountabilities framework would be of value for the Board.

1.1.4 Risk Management

Council has recently established an Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC). This is a positive development, although it might have been expected earlier in the life of a private institution reliant on student fees. The activities with both Bond South Africa and the Japanese MBA program have created and continue to create risks for Bond financially, academically and reputationally (see Chapter 8). Both ventures indicate the need for adequate risk assessment and due diligence at the point of entry into such ventures rather than seeing only their **positive** potential. The ARMC has alumni and staff representatives on it and is in only the early stage of developing a risk management profile. Firmly embedding this Committee into Bond’s governance structure will be an important activity over the next few years. The Audit Panel noted that more thorough due diligence processes have been and are being applied in relation to the new medical school initiative.

A related area where BU appears also to be just catching up is in paying formal attention to internal audit. The ARMC has been focusing on this, and is now overseeing an internal risk management committee, convened by the Operations Manager, Commercial and Financial Services, that is to identify and manage internal risks. Bond is currently advertising for external tenders for the internal audit function. The Panel was satisfied that internal audit activities have not been entirely absent in the past, but have been conducted at a less formal level. This may have been adequate for an institution of BU’s size and early stage of development, but this is no longer the case.

Overall, the current level of attention now being given to risk management activities appears satisfactory, and provides a good basis for future developments and implementation in this important area of governance responsibility.

1.2 *Academic Leadership*

1.2.1 Academic Senate

Senate consists of 23 members, including the dean and two others from each faculty. Responsibility for academic matters is vested in Council which has delegated almost entire responsibility for it to the VC. The delegation requires the VC to seek the advice of Senate, but also permits her/him to ignore this advice. Thus, Senate has no executive powers but is only advisory to the VC. At various times during the life of the University, there has been some friction between Senate and the VC as Senate has resisted this restriction and has tried to act with more authority.

The Audit Panel recognised the need for strong central control, but also felt there is scope for reflection on how the role and perspective of the academy can be properly expressed under these arrangements.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that Bond University ensure that its governance and management processes enable academic representatives to play a substantive role in the academic affairs of the University, and in recommending to Council on significant academic initiatives.

One factor could be a requirement that, if requested by the Senate, the VC or Council (as the case may be) informs the Senate in writing why its advice was not followed.

In the absence of faculty boards (section 1.2.2), the Academic Senate carries out the function of both an academic board and a faculty board, and is involved in more operational detail than is typical of such a body.

1.2.2 The Faculties

There are five faculties, which until recently were called schools. They do not have faculty boards, which, given their size, is understandable. Bond itself is smaller than many faculties in Australian universities, but some of the BU faculties span a relatively wide range of disciplines. Despite the small size of the faculties, the results of the 2003 staff survey (section 6.1) suggest that a number of academic staff have never met their dean.

As with the VC and Senate, deans are held personally accountable and no faculty committee is binding on the dean. There are few formal processes for academic staff participation in the operations of each faculty.

Each of the faculties largely operates as a discrete independent business unit within the University. The limited role being played, particularly up to recent times, by the Academic Senate, has accentuated the autonomy of each faculty. As a result there are inconsistencies in practice across the faculties that are significant and not obviously justifiable. The University itself diagnosed this in respect of student and community relations (PF p65).

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that Bond University's faculty processes be made more consistent across the University, following identification of where the best practices lie, and that the remaining differences be explicitly justified by reference to academic or organisational advantage.

Each faculty and operational unit maintains formal procedures manuals and handbooks to set out the ways in which policies are implemented. The Audit Panel viewed some of these and found them to be useful documents. They are vitally important in a highly devolved environment.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends Bond University's faculty and operational unit procedures manuals and handbooks.

In the near future, Bond will need to consider the extent to which it can operate with separate faculty policies in lieu of stronger central oversight.

1.2.3 The Vice-Chancellor

The Senior Management Group (SMG) and the Support Services Group (SSG) consist of the VC, the Registrar and the Director, Commercial and Financial Services, plus (for the SMG) the deans, and (for the SSG) the heads of the support areas. These bodies were established only in January 2004 in response to a recognised need for better co-ordination. They have almost identical purposes, namely to exchange information, to develop policy and to promote quality improvement. In practice, the SMG focuses on more strategic matters and the SSG on operational matters.

These groups have specified criteria for self-assessment, but they are too new for either the Audit Panel or themselves to form a view on their effectiveness. Bond also has three pro vice-chancellors, for quality, research, and teaching and learning, whose roles are described later. As they are also deans, they are represented on the above bodies.

Successful operation of the Bond system where the VC as CEO is such a focal point of responsibility depends heavily on the character and actions of the VC. The Audit Panel was frequently told that the current VC is highly approachable and willing to listen to the Bond community. His regular interaction with students is an exemplary practice. In a small institution many of the formal processes inherent in larger organisations can be reduced if an appropriate open and informal culture is encouraged. The success of this depends on the quality of personal relationships and in particular the leadership style of the CEO. This is an area of real strength at Bond and is materially assisting Bond's development.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends the Vice-Chancellor of Bond University for encouraging an organisational culture that fosters openness to discussion and high levels of interaction within the Bond community

1.3 Strategic Plan

Bond's Strategic Plan is reviewed annually, starting with the senior management, and a draft version is put on the web for staff comment. After comments have been considered and the Plan approved, the first step towards its implementation is to express it in a form which will enable it to be monitored through Balanced Scorecard (BSC) reporting (section 2.2.1). The Audit Panel viewed the 2002-2005 Plan, the 2004-2006 Plan adopted in 2003 and the 2004 draft revision of the latter. The continuity between the successive Plans was evident, showing a progressive and systematic approach to the development of BU.

The Council has reflected on Bond's desired positioning, looking 10 years hence, and sees it as "a small niche player providing excellence in the scholarship of teaching". (See discussion of Boyer's scholarships in section 4.1.) As a private university, and therefore without natural

comparators in the Australian context, Bond looks towards the USA for its models although the Audit Panel was not informed of any specific peers (see section 2.4). Given the current Australian emphasis on research as a central part of a university's activity, Bond is reluctant to see itself as a liberal arts college, and in consequence has rather unrealistically compared itself with Harvard in the sense of being a general-purpose private university. In fact, it seems to the Panel that Bond's academic programs are more like those in 'second tier' US masters-level institutions than either a liberal arts college or a research-intensive university.

2 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following objectives with respect to quality (PF p16):

1. *consolidate and develop its quality assurance processes to achieve continuous improvements in teaching, learning, innovation and research*
2. *devolve the management of resources and quality assurance arrangements to the most effective level*

Bond has done a great deal of work on its quality assurance processes over the last two years, starting with the establishment of the Quality Task Force as a locus for and promoter of understanding and action in this area. The Balanced Scorecard has been adopted at all levels of the organisation and action plans produced. Inspection of reports on the action plans from 2003 to 2004 shows that progress is occurring. It is too soon to say, however, whether all these activities are leading to “continuous improvements in teaching, learning, innovation and research”. Bond would be well advised to take stock of this in a major way in 2006, as the current triennial Plan comes to an end, and actively chart the differences that have occurred between 2004 and 2006, in order to assess whether improvements have occurred, and what the overall effect of the BSC has been in terms of outputs.

The second objective is also a work in progress. Bond’s faculties have always enjoyed a high degree of autonomy (and been charged with a large amount of responsibility, essentially stemming from their income generating accountabilities). This autonomy has led to variation between the faculties (section 1.2.2), not all of it appropriate, and to faculty initiatives that would have been better assessed centrally, both before and after implementation. Some tasks are now becoming more centrally co-ordinated (eg admissions). Bond will need to develop a process for determining how it will ascertain whether arrangements are at “the most effective level”. There is a possibility that small units are being given too much work in relation to the action plans.

2.1 Quality Structures

2.1.1 The Quality Task Force

According to the Performance Portfolio, the Quality Task Force (QTF) was established by the previous VC early in 2003 to review quality assurance processes and prepare for the AUQA audit. It has a senior membership (including the three Pro Vice-Chancellors and the heads of administrative and service areas). The position of PVC (Quality) was created after the 2003 Self-Review (section 2.3), and the PVC (Quality) now chairs the QTF. A further change of structure has seen the PVCs for Research and Teaching & Learning added to its membership. Its role is one of facilitation, relating to the use of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), benchmarking, quality procedures, quality improvement, change and awareness. A Quality Co-ordinator was appointed to support the QTF in its work. The QTF has now been constituted as a committee of Council.

The Audit Panel supports the need for a senior, adequately resourced, oversight body to ensure accountability in relation to BU’s quality management system (QMS). The QTF will need to act rapidly on the matters within its area in order to maintain the momentum generated through the audit process – especially in the light of the pressure of other priorities now the audit is over. It is appropriate that it be a committee of Council since Council must take responsibility for implementing the BSC and the resulting action plans. The body must report frequently to Council, and responsible officers (eg deans) must report regularly to the body on relevant matters (such as the roll-out of the BSC in their area). It is likely that, as at present, the body will need

strong administrative and professional support, able to advise on the use of the BSC as a quality assurance tool, and a continuing commitment of resources.

The Audit Panel reviewed the Quality Cycle set out in the portfolio (p22-23) but was unclear whether it is intended to describe the process of developing a BSC, the process of reviewing against a BSC, or a process that can be applied to actions at any level of the University. It is not convincing as a multi-purpose tool, but may be a useful reference for the QTF itself in checking the information it receives.

Within the quality framework adopted by the Board the PVC(Quality) plays a vital role which includes reporting to Council at each meeting. It is essential that this role be maintained in order to safeguard Bond's chosen quality processes.

2.1.2 Quality Representative

There are about 25 quality representatives throughout the University. While this is a good model, the Panel heard that its operation is uneven. In some cases, the representatives are too junior to have the necessary influence to ensure matters are properly discussed, some representatives are not replaced in a timely fashion, and the level of communication is variable. The system seems to be at an organisationally fragile stage, and needing senior management effort to achieve sustainability.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that Bond University ensure the continuation and effectiveness of the quality system structures, including the Quality Task Force, the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) and the quality representatives.

2.2 *The Quality Management System*

2.2.1 The Balanced Scorecard

Bond has for some years used the BSC concept as a comprehensive organising framework that expresses the University's mission, vision, values and strategic plan (section 1.3) in terms of specific actions. Once the strategic plan is agreed, it is expressed in BSC form with macro level performance indicators (PIs) and passed to the QTF (section 2.1) for discussion and endorsement. It is then distributed to the quality representatives for discussion with their colleagues and provision of feedback to the QTF. The implementation of this step is variable. The QTF then puts the BSC to SMG for adoption (or, more precisely, for recommendation to the VC for adoption).

Commendation 3

AUQA commends Bond University's use of the Balanced Scorecard as a systematic way of implementing the strategic plan and ensuring that the desired range of activities are included within the scope of the quality management system.

However, BU has simply adopted the four headings of the commercial version of the BSC (Customer, Internal Business Processes, Innovation & Learning, and Financial) as its four "generic pillars" (PF p19). It might obtain better value from the BSC if it were to adapt these headings to the educational environment. For example, in the generic BSC, 'Learning' (in 'Innovation and Learning') means 'organisational learning', not learning as in 'teaching and learning', and is therefore related to quality improvement more generally, not merely to the area

of student learning. Also, as currently implemented by Bond, there are gaps in the BSC in some areas, eg risk management and management of external relations.

The Panel checked firstly the faculties' 2003 reports against their BSCs, secondly the faculty self-reviews in which the faculties assigned numeric grades to their reports to indicate how well they had performed on several dimensions, and thirdly the 2004 updates of these reports. The progression was clear, with some tasks and targets from 2003 being achieved or at least advanced by 2004. The Panel noted that a central group, convened by the Registrar, evaluated the evidence proposed for the gradings. This monitoring by faculty is promising, but again is at an early stage. There is a high level of awareness of the BSC through the University, although it is not yet fully embraced. This may be because the process is at an early stage or it may be because the BSC format seems less relevant in relation to day-to-day activities, especially academic ones.

The BSC appears to be an excellent tool at institutional and faculty/budget division level. The Panel does not believe it will work as effectively at individual unit level, and Bond should give explicit consideration to this, and continue to reflect on the utility of the BSC below the level of dean.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that Bond University reflect on what it wishes to achieve from the Balanced Scorecard in the longer term, with a view to setting realistic aspirations and cascading it down only to areas that are large or complex enough for it to be cost-effective.

Clearly, units need to have performance metrics and be held accountable for performance, but there may not be adequate return on the effort of using the full BSC machinery at the lower levels, and it may even become counterproductive.

2.2.2 Action Plans

Bond's decision in 2003 to cascade the use of the BSC down through the institution resulted in a requirement for the production of detailed action plans by each organisational unit. The Panel reviewed a large number of these plans and the units' August 2004 progress reports against the plans. The reports are structured around the four 'pillars' of the BSC, and typically show: item or activity, timeline, responsibility, cost or resources, performance measures, and progress to date.

The Audit Panel noted that this introduction of action plans betokened, and in some cases elicited, an increased attention to measurement, albeit uneven. However, the plans and reports display a lack of milestones for actions and a lack of specificity for measures. Measures should be better defined and contestable targets should be identified.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that Bond University specify with more precision and a consistent level of detail the actions that result from the outworking of the Balanced Scorecard, so that performance over time can be monitored more readily.

The Panel's endorsement of BU's attention to the specification and measurement of actions is tempered by the observation that the University may be taking on too much too quickly. There is a large number of actions and many detailed actions within each plan, the total of which seems unrealistic for a small institution. These may have been included in this first draft without its various authors thinking through the consequences. BU needs to consider focused training to enhance staff understanding and ability to draw the plans into a better shape. The whole undertaking may simply grind to a halt if all these actions are seriously attempted in the currently

proposed timeframes. There is therefore a need for greater rationalisation, prioritisation, and explicit reflection on which (and how many) actions are sustainable. In addition, there is a rather uneven extension of quality assurance systems throughout the University, and so attention is needed to the overall consistency of quality developments.

2.3 *Reviews*

2.3.1 The Self-Review

In the second half of 2003, Bond conducted an extensive self-review. As mentioned above, this led to changes in the QTF and an institution-wide audit of all policies. It also served as the major mechanism for involving all units in the consideration and application of the BSC, the utility of which has already been mentioned. The self-review also gave rise to a large number of tasks listed in 'Action Plans' at the end of each chapter of the Portfolio. Because virtually all the Actions had target dates subsequent to the Audit Visit, the Audit Panel had no means of validating the practicality of what is being proposed. The Audit Panel enquired whether the workload implied by the activities proposed for completion over the next few semesters is feasible, and was informed that some of the tasks simply involved re-structuring existing activities. However, the Panel was not convinced that this was broadly the case and recommends that Bond carefully prioritise the actions it has proposed and then ensure that the high-priority ones are achieved. This seems particularly critical for a small institution with only limited capacity to devote resources to 'management overhead' obligations. BU should also consider using higher evidential standards in evaluating performance on its initiatives than was evident from the Portfolio.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that Bond University revisit the large number of proposed actions that arose from the Self-Review, in order to ensure that they are prioritised and that the high priority ones have the best possible chance of achievement.

Reference to tasks foreshadowed in the Portfolio is made in the relevant sections of this Report.

2.3.2 Other Reviews

Despite comment that cyclic reviews had taken place in the past, the Panel's request for a list of all such reviews did not produce evidence of a systematic approach. In general, professional accreditations (for example in computer science, law and medicine) have tended to serve, when required, as proxies for internal program reviews. There have also been a number of ad hoc reviews of both academic and administrative areas, and the consequences of these have been very variable. The Audit Panel noted, for example, that the Faculty of Business had an internal review three years ago. The review was rather superficial, and to date there has been no systematic response to it, and some problems identified by the review still remain. The MBA was reviewed in 2001, and this led to some actions to address the identified variation in teaching quality, but recommendations relating to the accuracy of marketing have not been addressed. The Master of International Business has been offered for ten years without a review. A review of the Faculty of Humanities undertaken in 2001 appears to have been largely set to one side. On the other hand, there was a review of the Faculty (then School) of Law in 2002 which made 17 recommendations. These were thoroughly addressed by the School and the Audit Panel was provided with a 2004 report on them.

While the cascading of the BSC to individual units has been helpful, its association with the forthcoming AUQA audit may have led some people to see the BSC as a QMS in itself, rather than as part of a QMS. For a complete system, evaluations need to be more pervasive and

systematic, and a review cycle must be implemented, with appropriate processes being set in train for ensuring consideration of a follow-through from matters identified within individual reviews.

In fact, BU has noted this need as a result of conducting its self-review. One action it has foreshadowed is for the Senate to propose to the VC a timeframe and protocol for reviewing Academic Senate and its committees (target: end 2004); another is for the SMG to establish policies and schedules governing review of faculties every five years (target: early 2005); and a third is to create a policy on lustral (five-yearly) reviews of all coursework and research programs (a draft of the policy had been produced just before the Audit Visit). (See also Chapter 3.)

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to introduce and implement systematic and effective cyclic review schedules for faculties and programs.

2.4 Evidence

Bond makes frequent reference to benchmarking (especially in wanting to be like a private American university) but little has actually been done and what there is currently appears ad hoc.

The absence of a specific comparator group against which to assess aspirations and performance is a weakness for Bond, both strategically and operationally. Without some meaningful benchmark, Bond is at risk of being content with solely internal assessments of its performance and standing. Through the audit process the Panel found no real attempt by Bond to benchmark its performance against that of others. This comment applies widely to Bond's activities.

The Panel noted CEQ, GDS and Rodski (library) data, BSC reports and financial monitoring, but there is a lack of qualitative monitoring of performance in research, research training, and some areas of teaching and learning. Systematic monitoring of performance needs to be made against the University's core outcomes.

The Panel concluded that there would be value to Bond in putting more effort into the systematic gathering of comparative data on other universities, particularly those with which Bond would like to compare itself. The data should be used internally for improvement and to aid self-understanding.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that the Council and the Vice-Chancellor of Bond University give priority to establishing a peer group of institutions for the purposes of strategic and performance benchmarking at institutional and program levels.

3 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Strategic Plan includes the following objectives with respect to teaching and learning (PF p14):

1. *maintain a commitment to providing high quality education experiences that produce in graduates capacities for leadership, critical judgement, initiative, enterprise, and ethical and social understanding*
2. *maintain and continue to develop effective evaluation of teaching and learning quality and outcomes*

Bond's commitment (objective 1) is clear, and students generally seem very satisfied with their experiences. The Core Curriculum is an effective part of Bond's attention to the graduate attributes, although the University itself has recognised the need for more systematic attention to their integration into all programs. More generally, there is room for improvement in the processes of program approval and monitoring. Bond is attending thoroughly to the second objective through TEVALs (teaching and course evaluations), CEQ, GDS and employer surveys.

3.1 Structures

As outlined above, the VC is responsible for academic matters advised by the Academic Senate. Senate is served by a number of committees, several recently established. Within BU's major self-review in 2003, a report on Academic Senate said: "At present, the committee structure, both formal and less formal, of Academic Senate, and the way in which Senate interacts with those committees, is neither cohesive nor particularly effective. This is because the structure has evolved in an ad hoc way over the last 14 years. ... It is clear that we need to define and formulate much more clearly our quality assurance processes for academic purposes. In particular, our mechanisms for monitoring and overseeing the quality of our teaching and learning activities require better definition and structure, and they also require some capacity to exercise authority and control". The Portfolio also recognises that "Achieving and maintaining high standards of teaching and learning quality requires formal process to be applied to approval of programs and monitoring of the effectiveness of programs in achieving their objectives and quality of intended learning outcomes" (PF p36). (At present, for example, Senate does not review programs after approval to check their progress against their foreshadowed objectives.)

The Audit Panel supports the above observations and intentions. In view of the size of Bond and the nature of its development thus far, it is reasonable that structures have been fairly informal and low-key. The Panel's investigations revealed that a great deal of action occurs through simple interactions between a relatively small number of people most of who fulfil several functions. This is a real strength and should as far as possible be preserved. However, as the Portfolio recognises, there are over-riding good governance and management imperatives that make it essential now to formalise various processes.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to enhance its processes for the approval and monitoring of academic programs.

This enhancement needs to include more external input into program development. The Panel nonetheless encourages Bond to do this in a manner that minimises the extra structure, administration and documentation.

The Senate's committees currently include the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) which was set up in 2002 but had been preceded by various other committees and task forces, and the

Coursework Committee (called the Coursework Program Committee in some documents) which was set up in 2004. In May 2004, a PVC (Teaching & Learning) was appointed to chair these committees. The TLC is responsible for matters relating to quality assurance and improvement of teaching and learning. The Coursework Committee is responsible for codes of practice and consistency of policy documentation and interpretation across the faculties. Program approval is the responsibility of Senate itself.

3.2 *The Learning Environment*

3.2.1 Class Sizes

From its inception, Bond has aimed for a low student/staff ratio (SSR). Bond quotes its SSR as being about 10:1 and makes much of this in its promotional material, presumably to differentiate itself from other Australian universities. This raises a number of difficulties. Although important, SSRs do not have a direct relation with class sizes and are simply a calculation of equivalent full-time students divided by equivalent full-time academic staff. Because of the three-semester year, students enrolling on that basis would be counted as 1.5 EFTSU in the public system. The Audit Panel was informed that academic staff might be required to teach in all three semesters, but the Panel was unclear how often this is actually the case, or conversely how many staff actually take a teaching-free semester (section 4.1.4). In recent years, DEST and the AVCC (of which Bond is a member) have paid particular attention to the calculation of SSRs.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that if Bond University makes public statements about its student/staff ratio (SSR), it do so by reference to standard definitions of SSR or explicitly say on each occasion that it calculates SSRs in a different way from public universities.

However, even allowing for this variability, Bond's SSR compares favourably with other universities in Australia so it is reasonable to state that the objective of 'a low SSR' is being achieved. Furthermore, although the two are not the same, the relatively low SSR means that small classes are a feature of Bond, and this is also a commitment Bond makes to its students. The Panel was informed of one case where an increase in tutorial group sizes to 12 led students to complain, and Bond took prompt action to return them to the widely promoted 10. The small classes are highly appreciated by students for the amount of attention they receive. Also, in a smaller class it is less easy to 'hide' or 'freeload', and the resultant pressure to be active in learning contributes to the students' development.

Bond's small class sizes and low student staff ratios are a real strength and a distinguishing factor between it and most if not all other Australian universities. These outcomes contribute significantly to a distinct 'Bond experience' highly prized by students encountered by the Audit Panel during its visit.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends Bond University for achieving its goal of maintaining a low student/staff ratio and small tutorial class sizes.

3.2.2 Teaching

Students report that both academic and general staff are accessible and approachable and that they experience a high level of staff support and interaction with their teachers.

Teaching and course evaluation questionnaires (TEVALs) are administered for all subjects in all semesters, and the results are favourable. In each of the nine semesters in 2001 to 2003, teacher effectiveness was rated at 6 or 7 on a 7-point Likert scale by 60% of students. Responses to some of the questions are publicly available in the Library. TEVALs are administered early for visiting staff, so they get feedback from the students while there is time to adjust their course, if necessary.

Over the period 2001 to 2003, a total of almost 60,000 TEVALs was administered, and the Audit Panel considers that their utility may now be falling, and that it would be timely to review the content and frequency of the TEVALs, or alternatively to focus on areas where student feedback shows weaknesses.

BU has participated in the national Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), but the results were generally too fragmentary to be useful for improvement, due to Bond's low student population and semester structure. Nonetheless, the results that are available are positive. Within the context of the usual caveats on the use of CEQ results, the Panel noted that Bond's Law program enjoyed top national ranking on the 'Good Teaching' scale every year from 1997 to 2001; and in 2000 11 BU programs, albeit with very small numbers, ranked highest on this scale.

In order to obtain more comprehensive results, BU has developed a combined CEQ and GDS, that extends these instruments (and is known as BUECEQ). It has done so in consultation with the Graduate Careers Council of Australia, and has the instrument independently administered, to maintain comparability with the CEQ. The 2003 results again show a high level of satisfaction with teaching, and also with programs and staff. Areas for improvement are students' perception of workplace relevance of courses and the development of networking skills.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends Bond University for the high level of satisfaction expressed by students in the staff and the teaching.

3.2.3 Semester Structure

Students have the option to take three full semesters in one calendar year, so what would otherwise be a standard three-year degree can be completed in two years. This option has obvious benefits, particularly for students paying full fees. About 75% of students take this option. The faculties structure subjects to facilitate this option, with details set out in the faculty handbooks.

Since one of Bond's objectives is to "ensure that its academic aims and aspirations are supported by effective client-focused ... systems" (PF p16), offering a three-semester option to address the desires of many of its student clients is achieving that part of Bond's goals.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends Bond University for addressing its goal of being client-focused by offering students the standard option of a three-semester year.

Bond has an unusual pattern of enrolments. The option for regular students to study for two or three semesters affects the student numbers in each semester. A greater impact, however, is due to incoming Study Abroad students, who are present in much greater numbers in semesters 1 and 3. There seems to be a widespread feeling that the Study Abroad students, many of whom come for only a semester, are often in Australia primarily for recreation, and other students report that they can be a disruptive influence and detract from the academic experience that Bond offers. Also since they are here for only a semester, the courses designed for them often need to be at a

relatively low level to be able to accommodate the great range of backgrounds of these students. This in turn may be having an adverse effect on academic standards.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that Bond University review its student profile, including the balance between full-time and study abroad students, in the light of its academic and corporate goals; and the nature of the programs offered to study abroad students, in relation to content and academic standards.

3.3 Graduate Attributes and the Core Curriculum

Bond has a statement of desired graduate attributes, as follows: “graduates who are leaders and thinkers imbued with initiative, enterprise and a continuing quest for intellectual enquiry, challenge and opportunity” (PF p35). One way in which BU has set out to achieve these attributes is through the small classes and the high level of staff interaction, mentioned above. It may also be the case that in a sector where a two-semester academic year is the norm, students willing (and able) to opt for a three-semester study are among those already showing more initiative and enterprise. The Audit Panel was not, however, able to determine whether there is a noteworthy level of intellectual enquiry.

The other main strategy for engendering these attributes, and instilling a level of uniqueness into BU graduates by the time they complete their courses, is the Core Curriculum. Originally this consisted of four compulsory subjects, but now has become more flexible with four pairs of subjects available. Each undergraduate student takes four of these subjects, one from each pair. The subject pairs are in the areas of communication, IT, organisations and values, and are offered by four of the five faculties. Both students and staff evince a very positive attitude to the Core Curriculum which seems to work much better than many ‘liberalising’ courses have done.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends Bond University for the effective implementation of a Core Curriculum of courses for all undergraduate students, which assists in the development of graduate attributes.

However, there is further work to do in this area. To underpin the graduate attributes, the TLC has set out nine objectives that should guide the development of teaching programs. The TLC also aims to establish (by early 2005) a timeframe and process for mapping graduate attributes to courses. In total, this is an ambitious agenda, but is necessary in order to give real substance to the attributes.

A survey of 50 employers of BU graduates in June 2004 gave encouraging results. On nine of the ten factors investigated, Bond graduates were rated higher (in some cases ‘much higher’) than other graduates the respondent had employed.

3.4 Assessment

There is a lack of external referencing in admissions and assessment.

A good deal of admission is on the basis of interview. While this permits more attention to student characteristics and suitability for particular courses than numeric mark-based selection alone, it means that Bond has less sense of the standard of its incoming students than other Australian universities which have (at least nominally) a public entry standard. (See section 5.1.3.)

There is no University-wide assessment policy. Consistent with the approach to admissions, examinations are generally graded on the curve, and there are no processes for external validation of internal undergraduate assessment standards. Taken together, these factors may mean that Bond simply ranks students, without confirming achievement against any stated and definable standard. Senate has left this to deans and to faculty boards of examiners. The Senate must take a more active and probably prescriptive role in relation to entry and assessment standards.

There would be value in having more benchmarking of output assessment. This need not be through an extensive system of external examiners, but by a simple approach that allows for sample re-marking by selected external colleagues. The so-called 'Benchmarks for teaching standards' (1998) are in fact simply procedural rules. Furthermore, the prescriptions are not necessarily complied with by faculties in their own procedures (for example in regard to penalties for late submission of assignments).

The TLC has identified the need for action in this area, and intends to "submit to Academic Senate a model and implementation protocols for Quality Assurance in Assessment" (PF p45). The Audit Panel strongly encourages this.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to review its processes for assessment, including moderation and benchmarking, so that it is better able to make unequivocal statements about graduate standards.

It should be noted, however, that the positive relationship between students and staff does not stem from soft treatment. For example, faculty procedures mandate that extensions for assignment submission are not to be given, and a percentage penalty cuts in at once, increasing for every successive day late. As with other policies, however, the details of its implementation vary between faculties.

3.5 Graduate Qualifications

Within its overall student profile, Bond has a high proportion of masters programs by coursework. The Audit Panel was given several instances where undergraduate and postgraduate students are in the same class, possibly with some additional assessment requirement. This may be inevitable where there are so many programs relative to the number of staff, but there is no policy constraining the nature or frequency of such overlap. Without such explicit restrictions and/or additional requirements, the standard of the postgraduate course may become that of a bachelor degree (as specified in the Australian Qualifications Framework). Such a course would more accurately be called a graduate diploma or perhaps a second bachelors qualification. BU's postgraduate coursework degrees have recently been restructured to feature extra tutorials and further research project work. Senate now needs to spell out the requirements and constraints more explicitly.

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that Bond University specify the requirements for masters by coursework programs in such a way that the distinction between those and any overlapping undergraduate programs is clear and academically justified.

3.6 *Medical School*

Bond is establishing a new school of medicine. The Audit Panel was only able to consider it in prospect, but arrangements for curriculum, accreditation and implementation appear to have been handled well to this point. BU is in an advanced stage of obtaining accreditation from the Australian Medical Council. BU is working with Griffith University on arrangements for student placements in hospitals.

With the advent of a medical school, academic processes and procedures will inevitably become much more demanding. There will be implications for research, research training, finance and infrastructure. The Senate and Council need to ensure that the proper processes are constituted from the outset.

4 RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following objectives with respect to research and research training (PF p14):

1. *sustain and develop the measurable research profile of the University*
2. *developing a stronger commitment to a research-based culture for teaching and learning*
3. *develop postgraduate coursework and research programs to strengthen postgraduate profile*

These are continuing objectives, and Bond is making progress on all of them. It is more advanced on the third and least advanced on the first. None of them captures the attention to broad-based academic scholarship (in Boyer's sense, see section 4.1.2) that Bond has adopted.

4.1 Research Management

4.1.1 Research Structures

The Academic Senate committees responsible for research matters are the Research Committee (BURC), chaired by the PVC(Research), and the Human Research Ethics Committee (BUHREC), chaired by a member of BURC. These are supported by the Research and Consultancy Services (BURCS). Also, each faculty has its own research committee.

BURC is responsible for BU's research and research training plans, the quality of research and research training, BUHREC, and the research centres and institutes.

The Audit Panel noted that BUHREC has achieved compliance with legal ethics requirements every year for the last six years, that the number of applications is increasing, that the number of complaints is decreasing, and that of 22 improvements identified in January 2004 for the Strategic Plan, 18 have been made. The Panel investigated the Committee's readiness for the advent of the Medical School, and learned that members with relevant backgrounds have been added to the Committee and that Committee members have attended a NHMRC workshop. Also, some BU staff are on local hospital ethics committees, making for a cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience.

BURCS has a long list of tasks in the support of BU's research endeavours. Some of these are outsourced, and in general BURCS provides whatever service it can. From the information available to the Audit Panel, there was no clear evidence of any systematic process being undertaken by BURCS to receive feedback from academic staff on its performance and quality of service. Bond has a robust set of policies on intellectual property and consulting (paid outside work), but the Panel did not investigate the extent of BU's monitoring of these policies.

4.1.2 Boyer's Four Scholarships

Bond does not aspire to be a 'research-led' university. Instead, it has committed itself to Boyer's four scholarships (PF p47), with particular attention to the scholarships of teaching and application, and less attention to the scholarships of integration and discovery. This approach fits BU's longer-term purpose mentioned in section 1.3, so the decision to take this approach demonstrates a fitness for purpose orientation. The Boyer approach escapes the narrow teaching-research dichotomy and allows an institution to demonstrate various levels of engagement with the broader range of scholarship associated with a university.

Commendation 8

AUQA commends Bond University's decision to adopt Boyer's four scholarships as its organising principle for teaching and research, and for clearly specifying the priority afforded to each of the scholarships, and through these actions to differentiate its mission from other Australian universities.

It is noticeable, however, that there is no reference to the Boyer scholarships in the Strategic Plan (see the three goals quoted above) and this incongruity needs attention.

In essence, Bond is a teaching institution with pockets of internationally recognised research. It satisfies the Protocol 1 and AVCC definitions of a university. It is seeking to build on those areas of research, recognising the importance of doing so in order to continue to attract good staff, emphasising the Scholarship of Application, but allowing for the Scholarship of Discovery where opportunities present.

4.1.3 Research Plans

The Audit Panel reviewed BU's Research Management and Research Management Training Plan 2003-2005 and the Strategic Plan for Research and Strategic Plan for Postgraduate Research Training 2003-2004. The Strategic Plans are appropriately detailed, but lack measures against which objectives will be assessed. The Panel was informed that these are early documents, and that a recent forum has been held to discuss how to move to a more specific, focused set of outcome measures. Faculties already have particular measures and emphases. In the longer term, it is understood that the measures will include the percentage of staff with doctorates, and international recognition in specific areas.

Within its overall Boyer approach, BU needs a more coherent and explicit statement of its research objectives, along with the strategies it will use to achieve them and the targets against which those strategies will be assessed. This should be linked with the resources required to support it. It was not clear to the Audit Panel that Bond had fully appreciated the level of resourcing that a greater commitment to research would entail or that under the funding arrangements adequate provision of funds had been set aside centrally to provide essential research infrastructure.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that, as Bond University has chosen to use the four Boyer scholarships, it establish measures relating to each of the four scholarships that reflect Bond's own objectives in relation to each; and it adequately resource its activities in relation to each of them.

4.1.4 Research Support

Faculties aim to apply 5% of their budgets to support research.

Bond has no provision for sabbatical leave, but does offer a non-teaching semester every year to full-time staff, during which staff are expected to do research and maintain any administrative or managerial commitments they have (cf. section 3.2.1). These are relatively short periods in which to complete a major project, but it is sometimes possible to arrange for the non-teaching semesters in successive calendar years to be contiguous, thereby allowing a longer break. This semester is loosely called 'a research semester', but staff can apply to use it for any professional developmental purpose. They are encouraged to spend some of it overseas, and there is some

support for this. The non-teaching semester somewhat substitutes for sabbaticals, which are not part of the BU system.

Staff are generally positive about this system, which also helps address Strategic Objective No. 2 at the head of this Chapter.

4.2 Research Areas and Centres

BU's Portfolio lists 24 "key fields of research endeavour" which seemed to the Audit Panel to be an ambitious number for 243 full-time equivalent academic staff. The Panel was informed that this list is actually a compilation of individual staff members' research interests, most of which are well short of being research active. BU has a definition of 'research active' and every academic staff member is categorised as being research active or not. However, at this stage some criteria in the definition are rather minimal, and at least one is circular: a staff member is research active if s/he is engaged in research supervision, while the Research Degree Handbook states that a research student is supervised by members of staff who have a continuing active participation in research. Also, in some cases, applying for a research grant qualifies for research active status.

The Panel was informed that BU has identified a number of centres and institutes for various purposes, and that not all are **research** centres (although three of the faculty listings on the Bond website are headed 'research centres'). Of the listed centres, some are consulting units, some run specialist courses, some are societies, some are worldwide networks and some are research centres. Thus, some are resource generators, others generate research outputs such as publications, while others primarily facilitate academic interaction. A centre is financially part of a faculty, and receives no University funds. Different faculties have different reporting and review requirements for centres. (The Portfolio refers to a "university policy on research centres [that] includes provision for the regular review of these centres", but the Panel was not able to locate a copy of the policy.)

Centres must be approved by Academic Senate, but to date there have been no explicit criteria for such decisions. Bond has recently drafted some guidelines. The common feature of centres is that they are loci of concentration, for various purposes. This variety seems appropriate and useful. However, it would be helpful if the various centres were not all subsumed under the designator of 'research', and the nature and purpose of each were made more explicit.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms the need for Bond University to clarify its policies and procedures in relation to centres, including nomenclature, processes for creation, monitoring and closure, and the extent to which a centre is related to the University.

4.3 Research Training

The Teaching and Learning Plan refers to the production, by August 2004, of a handbook for the approval and review of research programs, which it then refers to as a research handbook. When the Audit Panel requested a copy, it was told that what was meant was the 'Research Degree Handbook'. The copy supplied was marked 'last updated April 2004'. It covers all the aspects of research degree candidature, supervision and examination, and has helpful appendices on responsibilities of faculties, supervisors and students, on intellectual property and on a code of conduct for research. However, it does not address the approval and review of research programs.

Where possible, BU appoints two or more supervisors for each student, and no staff member may supervise more than seven students. At present, there is no supervisor training, but there are plans to introduce it. There is still an inclination to believe that if staff are sufficiently senior then the

supervision will be good. Each faculty has an advisor to whom students can take problems or questions of concern.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that Bond University develop and implement a specific policy on the training of supervisors of research students.

Research proposals must be approved by Academic Senate. Annual reports are written by the student and the supervisor. These go via the dean, who will attempt to resolve any issues of dispute or discontent. These are referred to the Registrar if agreement cannot be reached. Clearly, this is a system that can work for a small institution with about 40-50 higher degree by research students at any one time. Assessment is by three examiners, not including the supervisor, and with at most one being internal, approved by the Senate. Given Bond's stated difficulty in obtaining comparators within Australia, it might be wise to specify that at least one examiner should be based overseas.

There appears to be no University-wide policy on entitlements of research students to facilities or resources, which may have resulted in some inequity across faculties. On the other hand, IT and library support for students appear to be adequate (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, students interviewed by the Panel were generally satisfied with their experiences.

5 CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following relevant objectives (PF p15):

1. *provide educational services considered by its clients as value adding*
2. *foster ongoing relationships with the University's alumni*
3. *achieve superior employment outcomes for graduates*
4. *continue to improve the public perception of the University as a high quality, high value provider*
5. *achieve a balanced mix of student population*
6. *develop closer links with the wider community*
7. *enhance its role as a provider of specialist services to the community*

There is evidence that BU is achieving objectives 1 and 2; there is evidence that employment outcomes are satisfactory (objective 3) and tending towards superior; 4, 6 and 7 speak of progress, but while the Audit Panel felt that the current situation is satisfactory, it could not detect actual progress for all; for example, 5 is not being achieved, but BU is aware of this.

5.1 *Students*

5.1.1 Recruitment

As BU is a private institution, almost entirely dependent on student fee income, student recruitment is a critical aspect of the University's activities. Despite this, Bond had until recently no integrated approach to domestic and international student targets, strategies, actions or statistics. The area of student recruitment was therefore reviewed early in 2004, and a new Office of Recruitment and Admissions (ORA) created in March 2004 to incorporate the former International Office, Office of Domestic Recruitment, and Academic Services. The ORA now comprises domestic, international and administration sections, and it is developing a BSC to draw together the factors mentioned above in time for the 2005 budget discussions.

The Audit Panel investigated the potential effect of centralising recruitment when the faculties are held accountable for achieving their financial targets. This has been recognised as an issue and is still being worked through. ORA will be reviewed soon, particularly in terms of its responsiveness. The faculties, ORA and the BU English Language Institute (BUELI) will prepare budgets, relating to student enrolment needs, which will need to be integrated.

Bond identified the relative slowness and variability of its response to enquiries from potential students as a major weakness. This is an area of strategic importance as fee revenue is the major income stream. As part of the centralisation of recruitment to ORA, a Melbourne clearinghouse was contracted to achieve a faster and more consistent response. This seems to be working well. The Panel found this step vindicated, insofar as its sampling went. Several students interviewed by the Panel observed that they had approached several universities and they enrolled at Bond because it was the first to respond.

BU has over 300 international recruitment agents in over 50 countries. There is an extensive and detailed procedures manual for agent appointment. However, the Panel was not convinced that thorough monitoring of their activities is possible with such a large number. It is therefore

essential that BU keep tight control of the admissions processes (section 5.1.3). This is an area in which the Academic Senate might be expected to play a key role in monitoring entry standards.

5.1.2 Marketing

BU has a comprehensive but focused marketing strategy drawing on a number of core competitive strengths, and heavily based on exclusivity. There is evidence that about 10% of Australian Year 12 students are prepared to leave home to study at tertiary level. BU sees this as giving it a potential pool of about 20,000 from which it wishes to draw well-qualified students for the limited number of places that it offers annually.

The Participating Schools Program (PSP) is a sharply-focused joint recruitment and community outreach activity involving about 200 schools across Australia. About 50 of these schools are allocated BU scholarships. About 60% of BU's domestic undergraduates are drawn from PSP schools, with 80% of these paying fees and 20% on scholarships.

Bond's active and effective reach-out to schools, especially in its region (interpreted quite widely) includes bringing students into the University for two days to appreciate the campus and get a taste of university life. The Panel found that this is an effective mechanism. The availability of scholarships also proves attractive to students, for many of whom this seems to have been a deciding factor.

BU is aiming for a population balance of 50/50 Australian/foreign students, though the current proportion is more like 40/60. Achieving the desired profile is difficult, especially while the actual enrolment (about 2,800) remains well below target (4,000).

5.1.3 Admissions

Entry standards are set by the deans and Academic Senate and implemented by the Admissions Office. Credit and advanced standing vary between faculties. The admissions services offered by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre are little used, but Bond has a national admissions network, with regular meetings of the National Admissions Managers. In the middle of 2004, the ORA established a working party to review admission criteria, develop a credit database, improve articulation arrangements, and monitor application processing.

BU does not keep official retention statistics and information. This makes it difficult for the University to check whether it is applying the right admissions standards that match its curricula and assessment (see section 3.4). Also, it appears to the Audit Panel that BU is not systematically tracking the progress of foreign students within the University with respect to their IELTS scores on entry.

Recommendation 14

AUQA recommends that Bond University systematically collect and use statistics on retention and progress of students, reporting according to the categories of interest to the University.

The Panel noted that Bond has established a working party on admissions.

5.1.4 Student Relations

Many students are attracted to the possibility of completing a normal three-year course in two years. This option is only possible for students who do not need to work during the long vacation. Others are attracted to the study abroad possibilities. These factors have implications for the cultural mix of the student population. The 2003 staff survey suggested that this might account for the special characteristics of 'the Bond graduate', which are further reinforced by the small

community, the easy access to staff, a very helpful approach to financial assistance, and an orientation towards employment. This positive combination results in students expressing a special sense of commitment and alumni exhibiting long-term loyalty.

Because most BU students, whether Australian or foreign, are not normally resident in the Gold Coast, they do not have their pre-existing family and friend networks, and therefore are forced to become part of the University community. Because the foreign students are actually in the majority, there seems to be little tendency for them to form into national groups. Both these factors mean that the student relations are very harmonious (cf. section 8.1).

Commendation 9

AUQA commends Bond University for the outstanding relations it has developed and maintains with its students.

5.2 Alumni

BU has good relations with its alumni. It concentrates on giving students an enjoyable experience while earning a high-grade occupationally-oriented qualification. Not surprisingly, the alumni are positive about their alma mater. Employers and recruitment agents are also complimentary about Bond graduates.

As BU has such an international student profile, the 10,000 or so alumni are well-dispersed around the world, but regular contact is maintained by newsletters and email. Also, BU makes good use of the alumni as recruiting assistants and as initial contacts for assisting students to find suitable employment upon graduation.

Commendation 10

AUQA commends Bond University for the way it mobilises and maintains contact with its alumni.

5.3 Community Relations

BU enjoys good community relations. Its facilities, such as the library and art gallery, are open to the community. The adjunct staff both provide community input to the University and act as ambassadors for the University. Social invitations and consultations are common. Community members interviewed by the Audit Panel were generally positive about their experience of the University, albeit with a few complaints.

BU is a significant employer in the Gold Coast and adds value to its own community. Not surprisingly, Bond enjoys a very high standing with the schools with which it engages both in its immediate catchment area and across Australia. Health organisations and other agencies which collaborate with Bond on student placements rate it highly for the quality and professionalism of its engagement with them.

6 HUMAN RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following relevant objectives (PF p14):

1. *recruit, develop and retain staff who provide outstanding quality teaching and learning*
2. *provide high quality infrastructure to support all aspects of scholarship*
3. *enhance the teaching, learning and research environment by implementing and maintaining new technologies of communication and learning*

Bond is performing moderately well on all the above objectives. Staff performance review is effective and feeds into staff development, but the latter is in need of enhancement. Bond itself has recognised the need for some revision of its promotion policies. Continuing staff retention is high, but there is a large number of short-term and adjunct staff, so the apparent turnover is high. The quality of teaching and learning has been Bond's major emphasis (Chapter 3) and regular teaching evaluations are part of the review and promotion processes. The Library provides good support for scholarship, but the IT support for learning is at an earlier stage.

6.1 Human Resources

The human resources (HR) section has been small, and therefore able to attend to only basic HR functions with other activities delegated to faculties. Following a recent small increase in staff numbers through the addition of two HR consultants, it has revised various HR policies and procedures. HR's priority objectives for 2004/5 are in performance management, staff development and reviewing position descriptions. A good deal of the HR function is devolved to faculties, each of which has a HR representative (although these are not involved in all HR processes). Recruitment is a faculty responsibility, but some of the policies revised by HR are in this area. The Senior Management Group is about to consider the desirable role of HR in recruitment policy and practice.

A staff climate survey was carried out in the middle of 2003, and repeated in 2004 shortly before the Audit Visit. The 2003 survey was paper-based and had a response rate of 44%. The 2004 survey was on-line and had a response rate of 34%. There seems to have been no systematic response by management to the 2003 survey, and there are still some unresolved issues. Responses in the 2004 survey were generally more positive than in 2003, although the University still has some work to do in improving training, staff climate, and attention to quality. (Some findings of the surveys are referred to in the relevant sections of the report.) The surveys were initiated by the Quality Co-ordinator, fed through the quality representatives, and carried out under the aegis of the Quality Task Force (QTF) rather than HR. The results seem not to have been referred to or picked up by HR for attention. Although the Audit Panel advocates the continuation of some sort of QTF (section 2.1.1), it is important that quality and its associated activities be integrated into mainstream University operations, and not remain as a stand-alone and possibly therefore marginal activity.

BU's Media Policy states that "members of the University community are free to contribute to public debate ...[and] ... are free to speak to the media or in any other forum in their capacity as academics". The Audit Panel was made aware during the Audit Visit of one instance where a difference of opinion had emerged as to when public comment was to be viewed as a legitimate exercise of academic freedom and when it became unacceptable critical reflection of University performance. These are matters that all universities have to deal with. Bond is encouraged to consult with its academic staff so as to ensure reasonable expectations relating to public debate are generally understood and accepted. This could be taken up as part of a broader question of the role of academic staff in the affairs of the University.

Some 10 years ago, the number of general staff was cut significantly as an economy measure. The numbers are still only gradually growing. BU still has the lowest general to academic staff ratio in the country. This does not appear to have led to industrial difficulties in relation to general staff workloads but may mean that a larger amount of administrative work has been devolved to academic staff.

The Panel was informed that HR intends to review workload.

6.2 Staff Procedures

6.2.1 Appointment

All academic staff are employed on individual contracts. These are based on a standard form from which the dean can negotiate, the final version being subject to approval by HR. General staff are covered industrially by an award plus a federally certified agreement, while academic staff industrial conditions are based on a collective agreement between university staff and university management dating from 1989.

The weak central HR function has meant that staff are essentially employed by deans and heads of divisions, and this has emphasised the tendency towards variability between the constituent parts of the University, but also strong allegiance to the faculty/department. There is a real need to strengthen central HR functions, and the intent to review the role of HR, mentioned in the previous section, is timely.

Financial constraints are relevant in selection, affecting Bond's ability to attract staff, and consequently to foster continuing staff relationships. Quite a number of staff have been employed as a result of a direct approach or started in a short-term position and were then pleased to stay. Staff in the 2003 survey disagreed with the proposition 'morale is high', but most staff met by the Audit Panel indicated general satisfaction with the Bond working environment.

HR has reviewed its corporate induction program. This was timely. Despite Bond's relatively small size, widespread understanding and adoption of the particular institutional culture cannot be expected to happen solely by osmosis.

There is a high turnover of staff because of the high number of fixed term staff, a product of Bond's particular financial circumstances. This raises issues of continuity - of both research and teaching - and of extra load of appointing and orienting frequent new arrivals. Exit interviews, carried out by one of the three HR staff, are voluntary. Not many are done because there are few departures of non-fixed term staff. The reasons for leaving are usual personal (eg family needs) but general issues are taken up as they emerge.

6.2.2 Review

Bond's annual review process, for both academic and general staff, is called the Performance Development Review (PDR). This has been rolled out well, with training for supervisors, and seems to be working effectively. It is currently under review to address some perceived gaps, such as the link between research and course development. For academic staff, TEVALs are incorporated into the PDR. Adjunct staff, however, are not required to undertake a PDR.

Other review mechanisms exist in some areas, eg the Faculty of Law uses peer review of teaching, while the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has a 360 degree feedback process for administrative staff. More advice on how to use the peer review would enhance its utility, and it would be of use to the other faculties as well.

Bond is now linking unit action plans with staff performance reviews. About 30% have been done with administrative staff, but the process is yet to be started with academic staff. This will help to develop the new BSC.

Staff interviewed by the Audit Panel confirmed regular application of the PDR process.

6.2.3 Staff Development

Training needs are identified as part of the annual PDR and collated and prioritised into faculty and department training plans. HR conducts 'compliance training', but the remainder of the training is mostly devolved to faculties and operational units. The total training budget in 2003 was \$600,000, which is meagre for 650 staff. Consistent with this observation, the most negative responses in the 2003 staff survey were about staff development, identifying it as limited in amount and inconsistent.

Bond has no staff development or teaching and learning support unit. The responsibility for staff development is split between HR, the TLC and the faculties. This fragmentation makes it difficult to get a single complete picture of what is happening and where the gaps are. A new HR software system has recently been installed and BU hopes that all parts of the University will record their activities in it. The TLC has instituted a program of regular workshops on aspects of, and techniques in, teaching and learning. Some of the workshops are identified as a 'Teaching Issues Forum' to follow through a deeper issue, such as the actual direction of the University's teaching.

SMG declared training and development to be key issues for 2004.

6.2.4 Promotion

Academic staff promotion policy is applied at faculty level, with no mechanism to ensure consistency across the University. Bond has observed that the current promotion protocols need more precise criteria. At present, promotion may be sought on the basis of teaching and community service or research, but Bond wants a more explicit reference to the balance between these three aspects.

Staff association representatives identified no serious shortcomings with the way the University is handling its HR policies and practices.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms Bond University's decision to strengthen the central human resource function in staff recruitment, induction, development and promotion.

6.3 *IT*

There is a good IT infrastructure for students with a large number of workstations and the introduction of wireless technology. The internet link was upgraded in 2003 and the program for replacement of ICT equipment was accelerated. The TLC has been given the task of monitoring the use of information and communication technologies in academic programs, with special attention to flexible delivery (PF p45). The Audit Panel noted that Bond has several distinct IT systems, and was informed that the University is consolidating them. A Help Desk has just been set up, and further measuring and monitoring systems are imminent. In general, the IT area is proceeding well, although the Panel received mixed messages on IT support, and the increased attention to monitoring is very timely.

Student feedback on the quality of and access to IT facilities is very positive. There is 24x7 access, wireless access across campus and back-up support.

Commendation 11

AUQA commends Bond University for the quality of its IT support for students.

For financial reasons, Bond is well behind typical Australian development in e-learning and the use of IT in teaching and learning. During 2004, BU has been considering its movement towards e-learning, and a report on learning management systems for the University was produced in August 2004. The report recommended the use of Blackboard as the platform, in part because there is experience of using this in the Faculty of Business. The Panel supports these moves, without endorsing any particular learning management system, and observes that Bond has the Core Curriculum (section 3.3), which is followed by all students, and would therefore give a good coverage of IT-based provision in relation to the investment in it. This could be addressed relatively quickly. BU will need to watch carefully the cost, roll-out and management of the learning system. The Panel noted that the budget in the August report appeared to be very modest for such a significant implementation.

The Audit Panel endorsed Bond's decision to introduce an e-learning platform, although in future the University should attempt to be more agile in adopting IT innovations in teaching.

The Panel found that the Library and IT sections work well together, with a monthly joint meeting of senior staff.

6.4 Library

The Library has a good quality assurance system, with demonstrable outcomes. The mission statement is clear and linked to the four areas of the BSC.

The most recent of the biannual Rodski surveys puts BU's library in the top 5 of Australian and New Zealand libraries, except on facilities available (although it was still in the top quartile), and at the top on communicating with customers. Staff are seen as receptive to suggestions and requests. Participation in this survey is just one of the ways in which the library is networked into the wider library community. A range of other benchmarks are also used.

The Panel investigated the Library's readiness for BU's intention to increase the emphasis on research. The Panel was informed that Bond's small size is an asset in that the cost of access to on-line databases is less than for larger institutions. Also, the small number of students permits more individual support.

To support the plan to introduce a medical school, the Library has appointed a medical librarian.

There is a liaison librarian in each faculty, and positive feedback is received from staff. The Library provides training for students in special and generic programs. In 2003, 1,700 students attended at least one training event (two-thirds of the student population). Some students are surveyed on their view of the training, and some student focus groups are conducted.

Commendation 12

AUQA commends the Bond University Library for its effective support of the University's academic activities through planning, training, co-ordination, and its links with the wider library community.

Under appropriate arrangements, the Library is accessible to members of the local community.

6.5 *Student Support*

Student support services include counselling, medical, career development, sports and recreation, and the residences. Many students live on or near the campus, which provides many support facilities, including restaurant, coffee bar, post office, book shop, medical centre and swimming pool. BU students are well-provided for in terms of size of the service areas in relation to student numbers. There is some independent verification of the quality of the services, such as the success by the Fitness Centre in winning state and national awards. Beyond that, however, the services are largely relying on anecdotal evidence of their performance, and there is a lack of systematic evaluation.

Bond has signalled that it may use the BUECEQ for this purpose, and to gauge whether there is a difference between the experiences of domestic and international students. The Panel also noted that although these areas are producing action plans, they have not fully thought through the concept of the BSC, and how to link desired objectives with plans for implementation.

Recommendation 15

AUQA recommends that Bond University take a more integrated approach to the provision of student services, and that those services introduce a more systematic process for evaluating their own performance.

There is an academic adviser in each faculty. The advisers provide an effective service and are the first port of call for students, who may then be referred to the central services. In the Faculty of Law, there is an 'at risk' trigger six weeks into each semester. The Faculty office draws to the attention of the relevant staff member any student who is under-performing or not attending classes. This system could usefully be adopted by other faculties.

The Career Service makes use of alumni when possible to mentor and/or find positions for graduates. There are only two central Careers staff, but they work with other staff in the faculties. The Panel had mixed evidence of the effectiveness of this service.

The 2003 Staff Survey pointed to the desirability of customer service training for some support areas.

7 FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Strategic Plan 2004-2006 includes the following objectives with respect to finance and resources (PF p16-17):

1. *enhance levels of funding from all sources, particularly those independent of tuition revenue;*
2. *meet its financial targets*
3. *ensure that its capital assets management is supported by sound strategic management and planning*
4. *provide a physical environment maintained to high aesthetic, functional and safety standards*
5. *improve efficiency in asset utilisation*
6. *devolve the management of resources and quality assurance arrangements to the most effective level*

Objective 1 is a continuing high priority for Bond. At present, 76% of revenue is from tuition, which contrasts with one US figure it obtained of 40%. Because of the absence of any governmental 'buffer' funds, Bond has ensured that it meets objectives 2 and 3, and constantly is alert to ways of achieving objective 5. The physical environment is pleasing (objective 4). The Audit Panel was not able to determine whether objective 6 is being achieved.

7.1 *Budgeting and Reporting*

There is a collaborative budget process among the SMG and SSG (which includes the deans). It is transparent to the members of those groups, but the budget is not published. The process is essentially bottom-up, with faculties indicating what income they believe they can generate. Faculties have a clear understanding of the amount of revenue earned that is to be applied towards central overheads and loan repayments. There is a degree of flexibility to cater for the circumstances of individual faculties and there appears to be a willingness among deans to work together to sort out any significant issues. At any time, a particular faculty may be ahead or behind, but the decision is made jointly to permit a faculty to carry or be carried. As the ORA is now responsible for student recruiting, yet faculties still have the financial targets, they are effectively outsourcing (to ORA) the admissions process. They may wish to set up service level agreements.

Surpluses are not kept in the faculties but go to a central venture fund (a system which has in part permitted Bond to embark on its medical school).

Proper business development measures now appear to be in place. New academic ventures, such as the medical school initiative, need a business case approved by Senate and the Council (and on occasion Bond's bankers).

As is perhaps to be expected for an institution that is so heavily dependent on the tuition fee revenue it generates, Bond has developed a comprehensive and detailed set of accounts against which it monitors performance against budget. Bond's Board, Vice-Chancellor and deans are afforded detailed financial reporting which assists them in carrying out their financial oversight responsibilities. There is no reference to a Finance Committee in the documents provided to the Panel, nor was one mentioned in the discussions on the matters in sections 1.1.4 and 7.1. Over the next few years, a strong finance committee may be needed to superintend BU's financial affairs on its behalf, particularly as the medical school develops and the funding arrangements and expectations become significantly more complex.

7.2 Resource Management

BU has outsourced its Facilities and Assets Management, including planning. The campus has a master plan to ensure the each new building fits with the overall scheme. Also outsourced are security, maintenance, and health and safety compliance requirements.

There will be further external contracts in relation to the medical school, for example the handling of student placements in hospitals. The Panel noted that over the years problems have arisen in relation to both the overseas courses. All these factors suggest the need for very careful attention to be paid to the management of external contracts.

8 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are no explicit objectives in the Strategic Plan 2004-2006 that relate to international activities, although Bond's Vision is to be: "... *Australian in character yet international in perspective* ..." (PF p13).

8.1 *Internationalisation*

Universities are responding to globalisation by enhancing the international dimension of teaching and research, and having international staff and students, a process often known as internationalisation. Bond has no internationalisation strategy, a lack which is at odds with the statement quoted above from Bond's Vision. If Bond is committed to becoming "international in perspective", explicit strategies for its achievement are needed. Bond has foreshadowed its intent to address this by developing an internationalisation plan by early 2005. The Audit Panel endorses the need for this.

There is some internationalisation of the curriculum, and developments in the Faculty of Law were specifically drawn to the Panel's attention. The Portfolio notes that the plans for mapping of graduate attributes (section 3.3) and cyclic faculty reviews (section 2.3.2) should result in more systematic approaches and commitment to internationalisation of the curriculum at faculty level (PF p97-98). BU has also identified the need for more staff training to assist in this area.

In terms of the percentage of foreign students, Bond is the most international university in Australia, but it could take more advantage of the international composition of its student profile. The student body has a cosmopolitan, international atmosphere, with a harmonious environment (cf section 5.1.4). Those students who live on campus tend to be allocated rooms so as to integrate them rather than segregate national groups. There are also other opportunities to benefit from the international experience that study abroad students can bring and build actively on the multi-cultural dimension of the campus community.

8.2 *Student Support in Australia*

BU has an international student adviser, and foreign students are supported through 'welcome' tours, clubs and help to get part-time jobs. The main problems expressed by foreign students are homesickness and English language. The BU English Language Institute (BUELI) offers a range of courses, and its flyer says that on arrival students "will be tested and placed in an appropriate class". However, the courses are fee-paying, so this may involve extra cost for a student who might assume that because s/he had been admitted their language skills had been judged to be adequate for the course of study.

Students are monitored and those that appear to be 'at risk' mid-semester are provided with assistance.

Bond has a very high number of incoming Study Abroad students, many from the USA. As mentioned in section 3.2.3, the enrolment load varies heavily between semesters which can be unsettling for the continuing students and difficult for the staff, but is a major contributor to Bond's financial viability.

With such a high proportion of foreign students, there would be value in having more cultural awareness training for staff.

8.3 *Bond South Africa*

Bond offers several courses in South Africa through a local private institution, Bond South Africa, by virtue of a licence arrangement (now terminated) between Bond University (Australia) and AdvTech Education Pty Ltd.

As a South African private institution, Bond South Africa is subject to audit by the South African quality agency (the Higher Education Quality Council, HEQC). To reduce duplication for Bond, AUQA and the HEQC had offered to combine their two processes in respect of Bond SA, and Bond had accepted this offer. The HEQC audit visit to Bond SA had been scheduled for 20-21 September, and the AUQA Audit Panel Chairperson and the Executive Director were to visit Bond SA at the same time.

During 2004, the HEQC reviewed all MBAs in South Africa and withdrew accreditation from several, including that at Bond SA. Although Bond SA offered other programs besides the MBA, AdvTech decided to terminate the whole operation. HEQC therefore decided not to proceed with its audit, and the AUQA Audit Panel decided that the focus of its investigations would be the arrangements in place for enabling current students of Bond SA to bring their studies to a successful conclusion. These investigations were able to be completed without the Panel visiting South Africa. The Panel judges that Bond has provided for a satisfactory range of alternative pathways that should see all students clear of their courses well before the end of 2006. Again in the spirit of avoiding duplication for the institution, the Panel checked with the HEQC what monitoring of this process would occur through the HEQC, and was satisfied with the arrangement.

Despite speaking to the current and former deans of business, the Panel was provided with no evidence that Bond had held a post mortem when the South African MBA was discredited. Most of the reasons for Bond SA losing its MBA accreditation are specific to Bond SA or to the national South African requirements implemented by the HEQC. However, the AUQA Audit Panel felt that Bond could usefully consider some of the stated reasons for disaccreditation (including material of variable quality, students' lack of awareness of the multi-party arrangement and lack of clarity of locus of responsibility, tight timing between lectures and examinations and then delays in the availability of results) and reflect whether anything can be learned from these in relation to other MBA programs.

8.4 *Business Breakthrough Technology*

In partnership with a Japanese company (Business Breakthrough Technology, BBT), Bond has offered an MBA by distance learning for Japanese students (MyBondMBA) since 2001. Dr Ohmae, the owner of BBT, was on BU Council when the partnership arrangement was established and continued to be until earlier this year. There does seem to have been an issue of conflict of interest in that arrangement. The contract was never signed, seemingly because it started as a pilot, and the arrangements were frequently amended. However, it has now been running long enough, with both parties behaving as the contract requires, that it would presumably be regarded by a court as binding on the parties. Any level of uncertainty in this regard is undesirable, however.

Eight of the 20 units in the MBA are taught in Japanese and 12 in English. All units go through the standard Bond approval processes, and those that are to be given in Japanese are sent to BBT which translates them into Japanese, and fleshes them out as necessary for the Japanese context. Each resulting unit is translated into English at Bond, and the BU instructor of the English-language version checks that it is consistent with what Senate approved.

The Audit Panel formed the view that the program is coherent, despite the difficulties of bilingual presentations. The Panel was less confident about the admissions standards, especially the

English competency of the students. Students are not required to achieve BU's standard 6.5 IELTS (or equivalent) on admission, but only by the time they first take one of the courses in English. There was conflicting advice on whether an early course includes English, and even if so, whether this is adequate. Bond seems to put itself in the position of either discontinuing a student who has inadequate English or overlooking it. This raises concerns about fairness to students and places pressure on standards. There appears to be no general BU policy on the handling of programs in Languages Other Than English.

There are detailed manuals for Instructors and Teaching Assistants/Tutors, and Japanese course leaders are mainly full-time academics (in Japan or elsewhere) or senior industrialists. TEVALs are administered. Examinations for the Japanese courses are set in English or Japanese, but in either case Bond checks that they are appropriate. The scripts are marked by the Japanese course leader. There is a requirement that a sample be translated into English and the marking checked, but there was conflicting advice on whether this always happens.

Library support appears to begin only when the students come to Australia for the first of their two nine-day study periods on the BU campus.

The Portfolio states that the MyBondMBA has not been reviewed since it began in 2001, and that such a review is now timely. Since then, the Dean of the Faculty of Business has conducted a review, and the program is under active discussion. It is intended to improve the co-ordination and congruity between the various MBA programs. The Audit Panel endorses the need for action in this area.

It seemed to the Audit Panel that the South African and Japanese ventures have carried a degree of reputational risk without corresponding financial advantage. The Panel urges the University to reflect on this before entering any further such programs.

Recommendation 16

AUQA recommends that Bond University develop principles to guide the development, management and monitoring of transnational programs and partnerships, including probity and due diligence procedures and the maintenance of consistent and appropriate admission standards, including English competency.

APPENDIX A: BOND UNIVERSITY

1 History and Location

Bond University (BU) was founded and given its University status as Australia's twenty-first University by the Bond University Act (Qld) in 1987. BU is a private, not-for-profit and independent university. The campus is situated on the shores of Lake Orr in Robina, a suburb of the Gold Coast, and less than 3km inland. It is adjacent to the burgeoning Varsity Lakes community development which itself includes a Technology and Business Park.

BU commenced teaching in May 1989 with an initial intake of 322 students into four Schools (the foundation Academic Organisational Units of the University). Today the AOU's of the University are the Faculties of Business, Health Sciences and Medicine, Humanities and Social Sciences, Information Technology, and Law. On 29 November, 2004, the Australian Medical Council announced accreditation of the Bond University undergraduate Medical Program. The first intake of medical students into the MBBS program will take place in May 2005.

BU has grown rapidly as a major supplier of professionally trained staff, nationally and internationally and it has a significant impact on the local regional economy. From its inception, BU had incorporated a number of innovative features in its structure. A teaching calendar of three 14-week semesters enables students to complete the equivalent of a three-year, six semester, bachelor degree in a public sector university in two years. A student/staff ratio of around 10 to 1 (section 3.2.1) was also adopted from the outset. BU invests approximately \$2 million annually in the provision of undergraduate tuition scholarships to support a group of students who have high academic qualifications, and exhibit strong leadership skills.

Research performance is also encouraged, and under the revised DEST research funding measures, BU is centralising its research support and administration to optimise performance in compliance with DEST output measures.

BU's campus and sporting facilities support the local community. The University provides access to public lectures, performances, exhibitions, clinics etc., and the Faculty of Law administers a free legal advice service (Gold Coast Community Legal Advice Centre).

BU maintains a number of partnerships and mutually beneficial educational initiatives with a large number of local public and private schools through, for example, Student for a Day and Headstart Day initiatives, and teacher training Learning Communities programs established and delivered in collaboration with local schools. Additionally, the High Schools Mooting Competition involves more than 100 schools Australia-wide.

2 Key Statistics 2003

Trimester 3 snapshot.

Total Student Enrolments: (Semester 3 FTE)		2700
Research Student Enrolments:		43
International Student Enrolments:		1663
Student FTE/staff (FTE) ratio:		10.3 to 1*
Total Staff FTE (not including casual staff):	Academic:	243
	General:	289
	Total:	532
Total Operating Revenues (2003):		\$76.55 million
Total Operating Expenses (2003):		\$73.68 million

* Calculated as the average of three semesters and including staff on “research semester”, it being considered that research is part of the work of academic staff and that it contributes to teaching. Moreover, it is not DEST practice to reduce headcount by those on sabbatical for the purpose of official staff/student ratio statistics for public universities. (See section 3.2.1.)

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

Mission:

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

Values:

AUQA will be:

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

Objectives:

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Dr Pamela Dalglish, Consultant, Director, Goulburn Valley Health, Victoria, Australia

Professor William Massy, President, The Jackson Hole Higher Education Group Inc., Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA

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

Professor Stephen Parker, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Monash University (Panel Chair), Clayton, Victoria, Australia

Dr David Woodhouse, Executive Director, AUQA, Melbourne

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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

ARMC	Audit and Risk Management Committee
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
BBT	Business Breakthrough Technology Ltd
Bond	Bond University
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
BU	Bond University
BUECEQ	Bond University Extended Course Experience Questionnaire
BUELI	Bond University English Language Institute
BUHREC	Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee
BURC	Bond University Research Committee
BURCS	Bond University Research and Consultancy Services
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
DEST	(Australian) Department of Education, Science and Training
EFTSU	equivalent full-time student unit
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
HE	higher education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HR	human resources
ICT	information and communication technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing Service
IT	information technology
ITS	Information Technology Services
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
ORA	Office of Recruitment and Admissions
PDR	Performance Development Review
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
PI	performance indicator
Portfolio	Performance Portfolio
PSP	Participating Schools Program
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
QMS	quality management system
QTF	Quality Task Force
SMG	Senior Management Group

SSG..... Support Services Group
SSR..... student/staff ratio
TEVAL..... teaching and course evaluation questionnaire
TLC Teaching and Learning Committee
VC Vice-Chancellor

