

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
Box Hill Institute
(Higher Education)

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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

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

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

This Report of the audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) of Box Hill Institute of TAFE trading as Box Hill Institute (BHI or the Institute) provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, and its commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A brief introduction to Box Hill Institute, including its mission, vision and principles, is given in Appendix A; the mission, objectives, vision and values of AUQA in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel in Appendix C; and abbreviations and technical terms used in this Report in Appendix D.

In addition to the audit requirement under the HESA, NSAIs are subject to registration by the government accrediting authority (GAA) in their state or territory. As Box Hill Institute's registration approval fell due at the same time as its HEP audit, AUQA and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) agreed to conduct the two processes concurrently, using a joint panel comprised of an AUQA honorary auditor, an AUQA audit director and two VRQA panel chairs. AUQA oversaw, coordinated and chaired the audit, while the VRQA contributed expertise and staff support for the preparation of the separate registration report. This is the first time such a joint process has been implemented, in recognition of the extent of overlap between the requirements of the two processes and with the intent of reducing the regulatory burden on the NSAI.

The Audit Process

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

HEP audits under the HESA consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, firstly, the institution's objectives; and, secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The four QAFs are set out in the Handbook referred to above (and in the AUQA Audit Manual). Their primary purpose is to provide the HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance. In the report of its self-review (the Performance Portfolio or Portfolio), BHI reported against each of the QAFs, and appended a 'fifth QAF' covering additional compliance information required for registration but not covered elsewhere. The chapters in this Report use the

four main topic headings provided by the QAFs. Within each chapter, all the criteria for that QAF are addressed, but usually in a holistic way rather than criterion by criterion. The material provided in the fifth QAF, together with pertinent material incorporated into QAFs 1-4 in the body of the Portfolio, is addressed in a separate registration report prepared by the VRQA.

On 26 June 2009 BHI presented its submission to AUQA and to the VRQA, comprising a 42-page report against the individual QAF criteria, a 14-page appendix addressing compliance matters for registration (QAF 5), and a three-page appendix mapping the QAFs onto the registration criteria. The Portfolio was accompanied by two sets of supplementary materials providing a total of 80 pieces of supporting evidence. The joint Panel met in Melbourne on 12 August 2009 to consider these materials. On the basis of issues identified at this meeting, the Panel requested further information, clarifications and data pertinent to the audit and/or the registration criteria.

Box Hill Institute is headquartered at its Elgar Road campus in the Melbourne suburb of Box Hill and offers its 13 higher education programs there and on two other proximate campuses. On 7 September, the Audit Panel visited the Elgar, Whitehorse and Nelson campuses of the Institute BHI to tour the teaching and library facilities and review additional materials provided on-site. The main Audit Visit took place on 8 and 9 September 2009 at the Elgar Campus.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 70 people during the Audit Visit, including the Institute CEO and executive management team, the Chair and one other external member of the Board of the Institute, the Chair of the Higher Education Board of Studies, the general managers and managers of the teaching centres, program heads, permanent and sessional teaching staff, senior staff responsible for support services and quality management, students, and external members of curriculum advisory committees. Unfortunately, the Institute was unable to arrange for the Panel to meet any degree graduates. Sessions were also available for any member of the Institute community to meet the Audit Panel but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 9 September 2009 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the Institute as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the Institute's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other favourable comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report. The findings of the concurrent registration process are contained in a separate report prepared and approved by the VRQA.

Introduction to Findings

Considering BHI's institutional and educational objectives, AUQA commends the Institute on its success in developing an approach to higher education. The Institute's enthusiastic staff are acknowledged by the Panel for their contributions to the development of higher education at BHI which is student-focused and 'vocational' in conception. The Panel found that the delivery of higher education programs by BHI is being well supported through the range of alliances and partnerships that BHI is building with universities, and is being guided through the leadership of the Higher Education Board.

The Panel affirms the work being undertaken in the Institute to define a vocational approach to higher education and the Institute's efforts in moving towards the standardisation of academic policies, processes and higher education student data collections. The Panel also affirms the BHI's use of vocational education and training (VET) infrastructure and expertise in initiating its higher education activities. The Panel agrees with BHI that more work needs to be undertaken in the area of academic promotion, and acknowledges the challenges in developing a higher education academic promotions policy, in light of the limitations of the current industrial relations frameworks.

The Panel is of the belief that the BHI mission and future strategic directions for higher education, need to be more clearly defined and communicated to stakeholders, and that there is a an explicit need for a clear reference to higher education in all planning and policy documentation across the Institute. The Panel is also of the belief that the Institute needs to engage more fully with discussion on definitions of higher education, and the development of a culture of scholarship, and an approach to applied research. The Panel also believes that policies and plans for higher education, including a teaching and learning plan for higher education, need to be clearly articulated, monitored and measured, and this includes the development of a set of key performance indicators for higher education.

BHI has a strong approach to staff development, and many staff are undertaking pedagogically-based courses to up-skill qualifications to teach in higher education. In future BHI will need to broaden its approach to staff development to ensure staff are undertaking development in areas which are related to both the development of higher education and a culture of scholarship in their academic fields, and to the educational objectives of the Institute. In developing this approach to scholarship and higher education, the Panel encourages the Institute to avail itself of a greater range of external experience and reference points in discussing and developing BHI approaches to higher education. The Panel also believes that in future recruitment BHI should attempt to attract and retain academic and education leaders with a range of qualifications and experience in higher education.

Finally, whilst the Panel believes that the Institute has the beginnings of a quality management system, the challenge for the Institute is to develop this quality system for higher education, and to ensure that this system is sustainable, has clear accountabilities and expectations and is communicated to all staff.

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

Commendations

1. AUQA commends Box Hill Institute’s Higher Education Board of Studies, and in particular the academic leadership of its Chair, for its work to establish clear monitoring protocols and guidance in the development of higher education academic governance.....10

2. AUQA commends Box Hill Institute on the effectiveness of its Course Advisory Committee operations, and in particular, their role in supporting robust debate about the nature and focus of the degree programs.....11

3. AUQA commends the enthusiasm of Box Hill Institute’s higher education teaching staff, their engagement with students and their commitment to student-focused teaching and learning practices.15

4. AUQA commends Box Hill Institute’s commitment to supporting the introduction of its staff to the culture of higher education through alliances with universities and, in particular, through using its partnership with Deakin University to inform the development of its higher education programs.....18

5. AUQA commends Box Hill Institute’s commitment to developing an organisational capacity to provide higher education, through upgrading the qualifications of VET staff to teach in higher education.23

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms the emergence of the Box Hill Institute definition of a ‘vocational’ conception of higher education.13

2. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s recognition that more formal and consistently implemented evaluative processes are needed, using the multiple informal feedback mechanisms as a starting point for formal monitoring and feedback processes.17

3. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s use of VET infrastructure and systems to initiate its higher education activities.20

4. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s recognition that the adaptation of its existing human resource and enterprise bargaining systems to cover higher education staff works only as an interim solution, and that there is a need to develop stand-alone staffing policies and reward systems, and in particular, an academic promotions policy, for its higher education staff.22

5. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s identification of the need to upgrade library facilities, policy and planning and the action Box Hill Institute is taking towards that end.26

6. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s progress towards defining a quality strategy for higher education.27

7. AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s recognition of the need to improve its ability to collect and extract data for evaluating the educational effectiveness of its higher education programs.....29

Recommendations

1. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute’s mission and future strategic directions with respect to higher education be clearly and consistently articulated and the extent to which this is a short or long-term commitment clarified.8
2. AUQA recommends that, following revision of the Institute’s strategic plan to reflect its higher education activities, Box Hill Institute ensure that there is clear reference to higher education, where appropriate, in all levels of operational planning.....8
3. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute investigate, agree and adopt the generally accepted definitions of key concepts underpinning higher education and develop and implement strategies to ensure a shared understanding amongst internal and external stakeholders.....9
4. AUQA recommends Box Hill Institute identify initiatives to ensure the Board is better informed about and aware of higher education issues, and increases the breadth and depth of external higher education expertise available to it, including through its own membership.9
5. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute consider developing a specific teaching and learning plan for higher education which is able to serve the Higher Education Board of Studies as a work plan.....10
6. AUQA recommends that within its Risk Management Framework Box Hill Institute adopts an explicit risk management strategy for higher education with particular reference to governance structures and external academic input.11
7. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute develop a comprehensive suite of higher education academic policies and procedures and ensure consistency in their implementation across the Institute.....13
8. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute develop data collections to capture relevant details of those students admitted by a range of articulation pathways.14
9. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute’s commitment to higher education move beyond its current pedagogical focus to encompass the development of scholarship which informs teaching and applied research.18
10. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute refine its understanding of scholarship and applied research concepts in higher education, including the distinction between the two and develop and implement strategies to ensure that a shared understanding of each is developed.19
11. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute seek to increase the breadth and depth of in-house higher education expertise and external higher education experience in its management and committee structures, either through judicious staff appointments or through the use of a range of external input, or, preferably, both.21
12. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute review its staffing policies to ensure that it attracts and retains academic and educational leaders with prior qualifications and experience in the higher education sector.22

- 13. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute take steps to define its approach to quality and quality standards for higher education, clarify accountabilities and expectations and communicate these to all staff.....28
- 14. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute specifies broad-based key performance indicators for higher education which are reflective of planning objectives, and which are reported on regularly.28
- 15. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute’s data and management information systems to support higher education development be linked to quality management and planning.....29
- 16. AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute adopt more robust external higher education references at all levels of management and governance, to ensure breadth and depth of understanding of higher education and to provide benchmarks to support the setting of standards and the interpretation of outcomes.....29

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Box Hill Institute sets out its vision, mission, values and commitments in its Box Hill Institute 2008–2012 Strategic Business Operations Plan. These concepts and principles may be found in Appendix A of this Report.

BHI's objectives for the 2008–12 planning period are elaborated in four leadership and four management 'platforms'. The leadership objectives cover: Leaders in Teaching and Learning, Leaders in Innovation, Leaders Globally, and Leaders in Relationships. The management objectives relate to Managing Students and Customers, Managing People, Managing Infrastructure, and Managing Business Performance. With the exception of the last objective, which is discussed below, these are examined in detail in chapters 2 and 3 of this Report.

1.1 *Institutional and Educational Objectives*

1.1.1 Mission and Strategic Directions

BHI took up higher education following the Victorian Government's 2002 ministerial statement, *Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy* inviting TAFE institutes to offer degree courses in niche areas and to charge fees for them. Since 2002, BHI has built upon its strength in VET delivery to progressively develop and roll out more than a dozen associate and bachelor degrees in six broad fields of education, with further degree programs in the pipeline. In 2009, more than 500 of the student body of approximately 40,000 are enrolled in higher education.

Despite its development as a higher education provider, BHI acknowledged in its Portfolio that there is no specific mention of higher education in the mission or statements of strategic directions: 'During the self review leading up to the preparation of this folio it became apparent that BHI's higher education operations are inadequately represented in the high level vision and mission statements of the Institute which focus on the core business of VET provision' (PF p04). Higher education was seen by BHI to be implicit in and 'embedded' throughout the Institute's strategic documentation.

While the omission of higher education activities and intentions from the Institute's strategic documentation, including its Ministerial Order (Constitution), does not appear to impede BHI's ability to manage higher education on a day-to-day basis, the Panel found that the lack of explicit and clear reference points submerged higher education in the Institute's much larger and established VET environment. As a result, while most people the Panel spoke with are able to identify BHI's vision for higher education as 'vocational' and industry responsive, there is little consensus on how this is defined.

The definition of 'niche' areas also appears to vary, sometimes being associated with highly specialised fields such as those of applied music, and at other times being defined in terms of distinctive facilities or a practice-based approach to pedagogy in more widely-taught areas. The clearest statement of future intent provided to the Panel was contained in BHI's July 2008 submission to the Bradley Review, which presented a case for the development of a polytechnic model of tertiary provider.

The lack of a clear definition and defined educational objectives for higher education in the Institute's strategic documentation also has implications for future directions, and raises some concerns about the long-term viability of a number of its low-enrolment courses; this includes determining the extent to which higher education plans are reactive to the short term needs of industry or proactive, based upon a longer term educational vision.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute's mission and future strategic directions with respect to higher education be clearly and consistently articulated and the extent to which this is a short or long-term commitment clarified.

1.2 *Planning and Alignment*

The Portfolio indicated that the Institute's Board would be reviewing the strategic plan during a forthcoming retreat with a view to rectifying the omission of higher education. During the Audit Visit, however, the Panel was informed that the retreat had been postponed for several months due to a change in leadership at Board level, but that consideration of higher education would be on the agenda when the Board meets for this purpose in October-November.

The Panel believes that the Board review of BHI's Strategic Plan could usefully lead to a more general consideration of the Institute's approach to planning. The current '2008–2012 Strategic Business Operations Plan' is supported by a previously-written 'Education Plan'; by annual plans developed by key management committees, such as the 'Quality and Continuous Improvement Committee 2009 Plan'; and by plans developed or to be developed by the teaching centres and administrative units. The extent to which such plans are aligned to form a coherent suite was not clear to the Panel, and the Panel believes that at present plans appear to be both somewhat uncoordinated and more reactive than strategic. The lack of specificity concerning higher education and vertical integration across levels of planning has ramifications for BHI's ability to monitor the performance of its higher education programs and to provide both existing and future higher education programs with stable and predictable access to infrastructure and resources.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that, following revision of the Institute's strategic plan to reflect its higher education activities, Box Hill Institute ensure that there is clear reference to higher education, where appropriate, in all levels of operational planning.

1.3 *Organisational Culture and Understanding of Higher Education*

BHI has drawn upon its acknowledged strength as a VET provider to develop its organizational culture for higher education. Overall, this has been a source of strength. The Panel found staff are enthusiastic about the move into higher education and that managers are astutely redeploying their existing resources and expertise to enable the Institute to establish its higher education programs.

However, the Panel considered that, in building higher education from a VET base, the Institute had not yet adequately explored the differences, as well as the similarities, between the two types of education. As a result, BHI appears institutionally to have a quite limited understanding of the nature of higher education, seeing it primarily as an extension of vocational training,

differentiated from lower levels primarily by a more sophisticated pedagogy. The notion of 'open intellectual inquiry', for example, is equated in the Portfolio only to a set of 'Higher Education Program Graduate Attributes' and various opportunities for teaching staff to develop their 'professional pedagogical expertise'. In the course of its interviews, the Panel found few people who are able to elaborate on this concept and its broader implications for the Institute's approach to teaching and learning. Similarly, other concepts fundamental to an understanding of higher education, such as 'applied research' and 'critical inquiry', were variously defined and not based on a shared understanding. The Panel was left with the impression that BHI's approach to higher education would benefit from an externally guided higher education collegial discussion, leading to common understandings, of key aspects of higher education which differentiate it from other levels of study.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute investigate, agree and adopt the generally accepted definitions of key concepts underpinning higher education and develop and implement strategies to ensure a shared understanding amongst internal and external stakeholders.

1.4 Institutional Governance Structures

The structure for institutional governance at BHI is reflective of sector practice for TAFE institutions. The Institute is governed by a Board composed of ministerial appointees, elected and co-opted members, which operates in accordance with a range of legislative and legal instruments and is bound by its own Board Governance Protocol. It has executive, audit and finance, and remuneration and nominations committees, a Project Control Group and ad hoc working groups. At the time of the Audit Visit, the Chair of the Board had only recently assumed office.

The Panel was assured that the Board conducts a self-assessment annually, and that members keep their fingers on the pulse of the Institute through frequent visits, informal contact with staff and students as well as through formal meetings, at which it receives reports and monitors performance indicators, and ceremonial occasions. The Panel was not persuaded, however, that the Board has a firm grasp on BHI's present performance or future directions with respect to higher education.

The Board is composed of 12 members, none of whom currently has experience or expertise in working in higher education (beyond the fact that a number hold university degrees), although two have served as lay members of Deakin University Council. This, together with the lack of a clearly documented strategic focus or clearly articulated understanding of higher education, does not seem to the Panel to provide the strength of oversight which BHI will need as it moves forward with its higher education activities. One simple way of strengthening the higher education expertise on the Board would be for the Chair of the Higher Education Board of Studies to become a Board member; this would be in line with sector good practice.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends Box Hill Institute identify initiatives to ensure the Board is better informed about and aware of higher education issues, and increases the breadth and depth of external higher education expertise available to it, including through its own membership.

1.5 *Academic Governance*

1.5.1 Higher Education Board of Studies

The Higher Education Board of Studies (HEBOS) is the BHI equivalent of an academic board. Its large (34 person) membership includes around six external academics as well as relevant BHI staff, including general, executive and centre managers and the heads of higher education, but no teaching staff or students. It meets four times a year and is chaired by an external academic, currently a dean at Deakin University. It was identified to the Panel as reporting to the Board through the CEO, and the Panel heard that the Chair has unrestricted, if informal, access to the Institute's senior management.

HEBOS is identified as having three subcommittees, although the Panel found it difficult to ascertain whether these are fully operational and how they report to their parent committee. HEBOS' terms of reference include provision of advice on course accreditation, assessment standards, and the development of a BHI research plan and standards. The Panel heard that its major focus has, however, been on the development of quality monitoring and on overseeing the performance of the higher education programs, for example, through recent efforts to standardise the annual statistical reports presented to it by the teaching centres. The Panel concurs with this focus, and considers that it may be timely to revisit HEBOS' terms of reference to ensure that they are aligned with its evolving role.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends Box Hill Institute's Higher Education Board of Studies, and in particular the academic leadership of its Chair, for its work to establish clear monitoring protocols and guidance in the development of higher education academic governance.

The extent to which the Institute's Education Plan shapes the work of HEBOS is unclear, given the lack of explicit higher education objectives in that Plan. Furthermore, the Panel heard that apart from the reporting cycle which it is establishing, HEBOS does not have an underlying work plan of its own to guide its activities.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute consider developing a specific teaching and learning plan for higher education which is able to serve the Higher Education Board of Studies as a work plan.

It was evident to the Panel that BHI staff at all levels look to HEBOS for academic guidance and leadership, although the Chair of HEBOS was very clear about the committee's advisory status, and careful not to let it be drawn into assuming a quasi-managerial function. At the same time, the Panel was concerned that the Institute is perhaps over-reliant on external academics, and particularly, the Chair of HEBOS, to provide expert academic leadership for its higher education activities, given the limitations of its own experience of higher education. Should the current membership arrangements alter, BHI might risk finding itself without adequate guidance in the development, implementation and monitoring of its higher education programs.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that within its Risk Management Framework Box Hill Institute adopts an explicit risk management strategy for higher education with particular reference to governance structures and external academic input.

1.5.2 Course Advisory Committees

Each higher education field of study has a Course Advisory Committee (CAC) composed primarily of external representatives from academia and industry, as well as internal members drawn from the higher education management structure and perhaps occasionally from the teaching staff. The CACs function as subcommittees of HEPOS and appear at times to have some shared membership. The Panel was impressed with the work of the CACs in relation to curriculum development and maintenance, and was pleased to find that issues of focus and balance between academic and industry expectations – what one member referred to as ‘academic versus pracademic requirements’ – are vigorously debated at CAC level.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends Box Hill Institute on the effectiveness of its Course Advisory Committee operations, and in particular, their role in supporting robust debate about the nature and focus of the degree programs.

1.6 *Sound Business Management*

The fourth of BHI’s management objectives, Platform M4: ‘Managing Business Performance’, states that ‘BHI achieves sustainable business growth while maintaining financial viability and meeting contractual, legislative and statutory obligations.’

While the Panel found evidence of sound business practices and responsiveness to both regulatory obligations and government imperatives, it was concerned that the lack of explicit coverage of higher education in BHI’s strategic plans might suggest that the Institute has not clearly and transparently addressed the future viability of its higher education activities. The Panel received conflicting information about the financial performance of the existing higher education courses and the extent to which they are making a profit or requiring financial support.

Higher education enrolments have been growing steadily over the period since the introduction of its first programs, but are unevenly distributed among those programs. Apparently some programs are yet to achieve critical mass. The Panel saw plans, including some targets, for further growth, but these are built on assumptions concerning the introduction of new programs and of transnational educational partnerships and are already partially superseded by the failure to meet projected starting dates. The looseness of BHI’s business planning with respect to higher education raises issues of risk which should be more systematically managed.

1.7 *Accurate Representation*

Promotional material seen in the course of the audit appeared to the Panel to contain a strong emphasis on the vocational purpose of the courses and the role played by industry in teaching and approving the course facilities (PF p08). Current students feel that they had been appropriately informed about the courses they were considering. However, the Panel did hear some concerns from both staff and students about the extent to which BHI was succeeding in

establishing the reputation of its courses externally, both with industry and with university programs into which graduates might articulate. In response, it was asserted that anecdotal evidence indicated that the courses are increasingly well known and well thought of, but no direct evidence was available to confirm this other than enrolment figures. The Panel also believes there is a need for BHI to clarify the higher education rationale and outcomes for all programs and reflect this information in promotional literature as a step towards establishing the BHI higher education brand and reputation.

2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

BHI's Strategic Plan identifies four 'leadership platforms' which serve as general objectives for both its VET and higher education activities. The first, 'Leaders in Teaching and Learning', is relevant to the approach BHI has adopted as it moves into higher education. It states that 'BHI will provide an applied learning environment characterised by innovation, quality and teaching excellence which enables students to achieve employment goals and acquire skills, knowledge and attributes relevant to industry needs in the global economy.' The second, third and fourth 'leadership platforms' are considered later in this chapter.

In moving into higher education, BHI is mindful of the injunction in the 2002 ministerial statement that degrees offered by TAFE institutes are to have 'a strong vocational focus articulated from VET qualifications, whilst maintaining the unique quality and characteristics required of higher education awards' (PF p01). The Institute's first leadership platform goes partway to capturing the BHI interpretation of the intent of the ministerial statement, to embed its higher education offerings within the structures and policies supporting its vocational programs. But, as previously noted, BHI needs to clearly articulate its vision and plans for higher education; to ensure that a higher education approach is not overwhelmed in the VET structures and that the development of a 'vocational' conception of higher education is supported.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms the emergence of the Box Hill Institute definition of a 'vocational' conception of higher education.

2.1 Academic Policies

BHI continues to rely on its VET policies to provide guidance in a number of matters (such as examinations procedures) relevant to the conduct of both VET and higher education. It has devolved responsibility for setting other aspects of higher education policy (such as admissions) to the teaching centres. However, it has recognised that the devolution of policy development to local level has resulted in inconsistent practices, and therefore has progressively been developing Institute-level academic policies specifically to support its higher education activities. At the time of the audit, the Panel learned that five such Institute-level policies had been developed, with a sixth under development.

The locus of policy development and approval was not wholly clear to the Panel, but apparently lies with HEPOS and its policy and procedures subcommittee. The Panel noted that the status of much of the documentation made available to it was unspecified, and considered that better version control processes would be helpful.

Implementation of policies across the teaching centres is reportedly monitored by the directors and managers, although the Panel found that there are inconsistencies in practice. The position of Higher Education Administrative Officer has been created in part to oversee compliance.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute develop a comprehensive suite of higher education academic policies and procedures and ensure consistency in their implementation across the Institute.

2.1.1 Admissions

The Institute has policy and procedures documents on 'Student Selection into Higher Education Awards' which provide a framework of definitions within which course entry requirements are defined. There are also guidelines to support higher education enrolment processes and the administration of FEE-HELP, as well as a policy and procedures for Higher Education Advanced Standing. There is no overarching higher education admissions policy.

Statistical data related to student enrolments, grade distributions, progression and completion are compiled by the teaching centres and monitored annually by HEBOS. The Panel noted that BHI could not generate statistics on the numbers of students who articulated from its VET into its higher education awards, despite its commitment to providing such pathways, in line with the 2002 ministerial statement. However, the heads of higher education were able to cite anecdotal information indicating that a small percentage of higher education students are admitted via articulation pathways. As numbers grow, however, a better mechanism for capturing articulation data is needed, especially as it is of strategic importance to BHI's vision for higher education.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute develop data collections to capture relevant details of those students admitted by a range of articulation pathways.

2.1.2 Progress

The Institute has a Higher Education Progression Policy and Procedures covering minimum expected standards, sanctions and handling of 'at risk' students. The Panel found this to be a confusing and unsatisfactory document in its present form. This is one of the policies which should be reviewed more regularly.

2.1.3 Assessment and Academic Integrity

Assessment and related policies and their implementation were considered by the Panel to need particular attention. The Institute's Higher Education Assessment Policy was still in draft form at the time of the audit visits and appeared to the Panel to require further work. The accompanying procedures have not yet found the optimal balance between the exercise of local discretion in decision-making and ensuring fair and consistent treatment of students, for example, with respect to special consideration or the awarding of supplementary exams. Also, a number of the students interviewed reported that they do not always receive timely feedback on their work submitted for assessment.

Data on higher education appeals are not kept, as to date there have been none. Similarly, there is not a Higher Education Appeals Policy because, as the Panel was informed, none has yet been needed. The Panel does not consider that this is a satisfactory reason for not developing a policy.

The Institute's Plagiarism Policy covers collusion and cheating as well as plagiarism and currently serves the needs of both VET and higher education students. Students appear to be aware of the policy, although not necessarily of the penalties (which are covered in the implementation procedures rather than in the policy itself). It appears that most, but not all of the teaching centres require students to sign an assignment coversheet confirming the originality of their work. The Portfolio indicated (PF p19) that initiatives are underway to develop a central

plagiarism register to be overseen by HEBOS and also to trial the use of plagiarism detection software. The Panel was able to confirm that these are matters under discussion and urges that they be progressed.

2.1.4 Moderation and Benchmarking of Assessment

Higher education examinations are reportedly (PF p24) being moderated in accord with the Institute's Higher Education Benchmarking and Moderation Guidelines. In practice, however, the Panel heard from staff that only about half those interviewed had moderation in their units. Where moderation does occur it takes various forms, ranging from informal discussion with external industry contacts or with an academic colleague from one of the universities, to a formal agreement between BHI and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE for external marking and benchmarking of core subjects in music performance.

The Panel noted that a 'moderation template' covering check marking of sampled student work and providing for scaling of an entire cohort's results is to be trialled in Semester 2, 2009. This will be a good step towards supporting consistent implementation of expectations with respect to moderation. The Panel was also pleased to learn that moderation is to be the 'next big issue' on HEBOS' agenda.

2.2 *Teaching and Learning*

The Panel found that staff at BHI, in both teaching and support roles, are generally concerned for students as learners and attentive to their needs and interests. This appears to be part of the broader educational culture of the Institute, and it is hoped that it can be sustained as higher education enrolments grow and further diversify.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends the enthusiasm of Box Hill Institute's higher education teaching staff, their engagement with students and their commitment to student-focused teaching and learning practices.

The Panel did, however, hear from students that some of their teachers, while friendly and approachable, do not appear to be fully up-to-date in their subjects or in other cases, whilst technically proficient, do not have the expected teaching expertise.

2.2.1 Oversight of Teaching and Learning

While the governance of higher education is under the purview of HEBOS and the CACs and the management of higher education programs in the hands of the teaching centres, BHI has established a centralised committee structure to provide oversight and coordination of its higher education implementation activities. A Degree Implementation Committee was set up in 2008 with membership drawn from management levels in the relevant teaching centres and service centres. The Committee appears to provide a useful forum for the exchange of information and ideas, although the Panel noted that teaching staff (other than the higher education heads) are not involved and appear to have few formal channels for input into planning and policy decisions affecting their programs. This is out of step with good practice in the sector.

2.2.2 Graduate Attributes

BHI has developed a set of nine higher education 'Program Graduate Attributes' which are intended 'to define the curriculum content, are reflected in the construction of assessment tools and encapsulate BHI's vision for the skills of a vocational degree graduate' (PF p08). These cover a selection of generic skills, including critical analysis and creative thinking, as well as some more vocationally-oriented skills, such as commercial and organisational acumen and corporate and community ethics. They appear well-chosen to support BHI's educational intent.

Although the Program Graduate Attributes are posted on the staff intranet, the Panel found only a few staff, and no students, are conversant with them. The Panel was advised that it is the responsibility of the CACs to ensure that the graduate attributes are in fact incorporated into the curriculum, but CAC members with whom the Panel spoke are not aware of the attributes per se. It is evident that BHI needs to do further work to ensure that its intentions with respect to the graduate attributes are met.

2.2.3 Teaching Innovation

BHI's second leadership platform, 'Leaders in Innovation', places its approach to teaching explicitly under the banner of innovative approaches: 'BHI will be differentiated from its competitors by its innovative products, services and training delivery methodologies and its linkages with industry.'

The Institute operates a semi-formal system of 'communities of practice' (COPs) designed to bring teaching staff together around common interests or themes. A Higher Education COP was established to support staff in the transition from VET to higher education delivery, and has since been disbanded. An Applied Research COP is currently active, drawing staff with an interest in applied research. Membership in the COPs is open to both VET and higher education staff, and the Panel heard that some higher education staff do in fact participate.

Other Institute-wide initiatives to support innovative teaching include annual teaching and learning symposia, teaching workshops and plans for the establishment of a virtual teaching and learning college. The Panel heard from teaching staff that one or two had attended the annual symposia or campus-based innovation workshops and found items of interest, although the focus was primarily on VET teaching and time-table clashes got in the way of participation. No staff member was aware of the plans for the new virtual teaching and learning college. A few knew about the Institute's innovation website and said that some of their students use it.

Overall, the Panel formed the impression that BHI's objectives with respect to innovative teaching have not yet penetrated to its higher education activities and that its higher education staff need better targeted support if they are to be fully engaged.

2.2.4 Workplace Learning

BHI's claims in the Portfolio that its higher education programs are aligned with the needs of industry led the Panel to expect considerable engagement between the Institute and industry partners, including the provision of industry placements as part of its degree programs. Industry involvement in the CACs appears to be both strong and productive, and at least one of the degree programs contains an embedded industry certificate course. However, the Panel discovered that much of the workplace learning engaged in by students is informal, with only two of the six discipline areas offering a formal practicum component as an assessable part of the degree. This is an area which BHI could, with advantage, strengthen, given its objective of delivering 'degrees which lead to relevant vocational outcomes' (PF p15).

2.3 Monitoring Student Feedback

A number of mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students about their experience and satisfaction with their courses are in place at BHI, although the Institute acknowledges that further work and more coordination are needed. Steps are being taken to standardise student unit evaluations across teaching centres, with the introduction in 2009 of a standard evaluation template. A biannual student satisfaction survey, administered by the Hay Group, is to be revised to enable disaggregation of higher education from VET student data. The Graduate Destination Survey administered by Graduate Careers Australia is also being introduced in 2009 once the Institute has a valid graduate cohort.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute's recognition that more formal and consistently implemented evaluative processes are needed, using the multiple informal feedback mechanisms as a starting point for formal monitoring and feedback processes.

Nevertheless, while mechanisms to capture student feedback to date are somewhat informal, due in part to the very small numbers of higher education students, the Panel formed the view that student responses are widely considered and acted upon. The students interviewed corroborated this impression.

2.4 Collaborative Arrangements and Partnerships

Platform L4, 'Leaders in Relationships', sets as an objective that 'BHI has productive, collaborative and beneficial relationships with industry, enterprises, community, education and government which enhance business development and opportunities for staff and students.'

As a large VET institute, BHI has long-standing relations with business and industry and, as has been noted above, is leveraging these for the advancement of its higher education programs, especially through the membership of its CACs. It has also made a start at developing partnerships with other higher education providers, including benchmarking relationships with other Victorian TAFEs and formal collaborations with several Victorian universities.

Among these, its partnership with Deakin University is particularly noteworthy. In consultation with the then Minister for Education and Training, BHI signed a memorandum of understanding with Deakin in June 2005, providing for a range of collaborative initiatives, including articulation arrangements, joint delivery, joint marketing and professional development projects. Deakin provides the Chair of BHI's HEBOs and, through membership in a number of BHI and partnership committees, has made a significant contribution to the early implementation and continued quality assurance of BHI's degree programs.

Other university collaborations include the provision by Deakin and Monash universities of bespoke postgraduate courses in education designed to assist BHI staff moving from VET to higher education teaching to upgrade their credentials and methodologies. The Panel was impressed with BHI's collaboration with its university partners to provide professional development opportunities for its staff.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends Box Hill Institute's commitment to supporting the introduction of its staff to the culture of higher education through alliances with universities and, in particular, through using its partnership with Deakin University to inform the development of its higher education programs.

BHI has a significant presence internationally through its Global Education Network partnerships, supporting its third leadership platform of being 'Leaders Globally': 'BHI will be acknowledged as Australia's Number One provider of education and training products and services internationally, and will prepare its students and employees to participate in the global community and economy.'

To date, although it does attract a number of international students to its higher education programs in Australia, BHI's transnational activities have focused on providing offshore study experiences for VET students. The Institute plans, however, to extend such opportunities to its higher education students and at the time of the audit was envisaging the development of at least one international partnership for offshore course delivery. The Panel examined a draft 'TNE Quality Checklist' intended to assist due diligence with potential offshore partners and considered that it provided a starting point. BHI is, however, strongly encouraged to seek advice and guidance from higher education institutions experienced in transnational education partnerships as it moves ahead with its plans.

2.5 Scholarship and Applied Research

In its Portfolio, BHI identifies a number of initiatives to support its higher education staff in scholarship and applied research. Among these are provision of financial support to staff to undertake study for postgraduate qualifications in education; establishment of the Applied Research COP; and 'lectures from visiting scholars to develop the professional expertise of its teaching staff' (PF p20).

While all are sound undertakings, the scholarly focus to date has been essentially pedagogical rather than discipline based and reflects BHI's apparent conceptualisation of higher education as simply a more advanced form of vocational education, differentiated from VET training primarily by its methodology. This has been a useful and successful entry point into the transition from VET to higher education provision, but in the Panel's view, does not equate to what is commonly understood by 'scholarship' in higher education and is not sufficient to help the Institute to build the in-house expertise necessary to enable it to develop, accredit and maintain the quality of its own higher education programs.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute's commitment to higher education move beyond its current pedagogical focus to encompass the development of scholarship which informs teaching and applied research.

Discussions with staff at all levels led the Panel to conclude that BHI has not yet clearly defined what it understands by 'scholarship' and 'applied research' in a higher education context, nor has it examined its current understanding of these concepts in relation to sector norms. It is important for it to determine how it will support staff in maintaining their scholarly currency in the disciplines in which they teach. It is imperative that a more rigorous definition of applied research be adopted. This will be particularly important and relevant if the Institute is to achieve

its ambition to be a leader in innovation beyond classroom-based action research and to establish itself in, for example, the provision of high-level consultancy services to industry.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute refine its understanding of scholarship and applied research concepts in higher education, including the distinction between the two and develop and implement strategies to ensure that a shared understanding of each is developed.

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

The first three of the four ‘management platforms’ set out in BHI’s 2008–2012 Strategic Business Operations Plan serve as relevant objectives for this chapter, and are referenced below under the appropriate heading.

3.1 *Organisational Structures and Decision Making*

Day-to-day management of BHI, including its VET and higher education programs, is delegated by the Board to the CEO, who is supported in running the Institute by a Senior Executive Management Team of six people, all of whom have both VET and higher education responsibilities. The CEO receives advice from five statutory, legal or compliance committees and some 15 CEO advisory or management committees, of which only one (HEBOS, reporting through the Senior Executive Director, Education and Training) provides advice on matters related solely to higher education.

Higher education courses are delivered by five of the Institute’s teaching centres, which also deliver VET courses. The management of higher education has thus been ‘embedded’ in the existing management structures of the Institute, which it shares with VET. There are four levels of managers above the higher education teaching staff. Staff at the three top levels (executive/general managers and, below them, teaching centre managers), led by the Senior Executive Director Education and Training, all have both VET and higher education responsibilities. The six higher education heads, however, have purely higher education responsibilities.

Committees play a major role in day-to-day management and decision making at BHI, and the Panel was struck by the number of committees which share in the oversight of higher education activities and services. In several instances, it found it difficult to ascertain exactly where responsibility for particular decisions lies, and considered that accountabilities for the implementation of strategic directions, policies and quality assurance, could be more explicit.

The deliberate use of existing VET management structures, facilities and staff to leverage the roll-out of higher education has enabled BHI to get its courses up and running quickly, achieving efficiencies through the redeployment of existing expertise and resources. This has been particularly true at general and centre manager levels.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute’s use of VET infrastructure and systems to initiate its higher education activities.

There is a downside, however, to this strategic embedding of higher education within VET structures under the oversight of existing managers, almost none of whom (although well-qualified and highly capable) have any prior experience of higher education, other than their own studies. Although some of the staff teaching in higher education are from university backgrounds, the hierarchical and multi-layered nature of BHI’s management structure means that they are not in a position to bring this experience to bear on organisational decision making, which typically appears to take place in committees largely populated by managers. The Panel felt that, while BHI is generally well-run, the lack of higher education experience on its

committees and among its managers is unintentionally contributing to the inconsistent understanding of the distinctive nature of higher education.

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute seek to increase the breadth and depth of in-house higher education expertise and external higher education experience in its management and committee structures, either through judicious staff appointments or through the use of a range of external input, or, preferably, both.

3.2 Academic and Administrative Staff

M2: 'Managing People': BHI will engage its people in a dynamic culture which promotes and recognises achievement, enhances organisational capacity to deliver on strategic promises and provides an excellent workplace.'

3.2.1 Staffing Profile

Across the six discipline areas in which it offers higher education courses, BHI employs 17 full-time and ten part-time permanent teaching staff, six full-time contract teachers and 36.5 part-time sessional staff. Staffing data for non-teaching staff does not discriminate between higher education and VET.

3.2.2 Employment Policies and Practices

Many teachers are recruited into higher education from within the Institute's VET workforce and, in fact, many continue to teach in both VET and higher education. Staffing policies mandate that higher education teachers hold qualifications at one Australian Qualification Framework level above that at which they are teaching, and, thanks in part to the 'up-skilling' strategy described below, most of the teaching staff hold postgraduate qualifications. Position descriptions for higher education teachers are focused on basic duties and do not specify any expectation for research or 'applied research'. Staff recruited from outside the Institute reported that their induction had been satisfactory.

3.2.3 Academic Leadership

The position description for heads of higher education is of some concern to the Panel, as it does not appear to be in line with higher education sector criteria for appointments to key academic leadership roles. While a postgraduate qualification is required, the requirement apparently can be waived, as 'applicants not possessing a higher level degree will be expected to commence study ... within six months of commencing employment.' Industry experience is essential and familiarity with the TAFE sector is 'desirable', but prior higher education experience is not mentioned. Nor is there a requirement that higher education heads demonstrate any research capacity or scholarly output. At present, the six current higher education heads are well qualified, counting three PhDs and three masters degrees. Three have research experience and four have previous university teaching experience, although mostly as casual or short-term lecturers. Future vacancies filled under the current position criteria could, however, result in much less well-qualified leaders.

The absence of prior higher education experience among senior and middle management is noted by the Panel. This, together with the absence of such a requirement at the level of higher education head, exposes the Institute to significant risks in its ability to provide the academic

leadership needed to sustain its higher education activities. The Panel's strong view is that BHI will be better able to strengthen its higher education culture if it can draw on deeper higher education experience in both academic leadership and educational management positions.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute review its staffing policies to ensure that it attracts and retains academic and educational leaders with prior qualifications and experience in the higher education sector.

3.2.4 Workloads and Conditions

Higher education teaching staff (defined as 'teachers') are employed under the 2009 Victorian TAFE Teaching Staff Multi Business Agreement, that is, under the same industrial agreement as VET teachers. Individual workloads are defined annually through an 'Allocation of Scheduled Duties' process based on approved combinations of scheduled non-teaching and teaching duties, including time release for scholarly activities associated with teaching. In practice, one hour of higher education teaching is considered to be equivalent to 90 minutes of VET teaching when setting an individual staff member's teaching load. The Panel appreciated the work-around of scheduled duties adopted by the Institute to enable it to provide more appropriate employment conditions for higher education teachers, but considered that this approach is not suitable in the longer term.

3.2.5 Career Paths and Promotions

BHI does not have an academic promotion policy for its higher education teaching staff. The award structure provides for only two levels of appointment, 'teacher' and 'head'. Although the Panel was advised that there are salary steps within the teacher level, there is no provision for promotion from one level to the next, as 'head' appointments are filled by recruitment. The lack of a career pathway for higher education teachers is cited by staff as a particular disincentive and considered by the Panel to be a risk factor in BHI's ability to attract and retain a well-qualified higher education workforce in the future.

In line with its decision to 'embed' higher education within its existing structures, BHI has mostly drawn upon its existing staff to teach, manage and support its higher education courses. This policy seems to have worked well for both the institution and its staff, who are enthusiastic about the opportunity this gave them to broaden the scope of their responsibilities. However, the Institute is aware that a number of its staffing policies and practices do not adequately reflect the situation of higher education staff and has been taking steps to adapt these as required. In the longer term, it is recognised that new policies and procedures will need to be developed, within the bounds of the Government TAFE Funding Agreement and the regulatory framework binding TAFE institutes, and the Panel concurred that this is a matter requiring urgent and sustained attention.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute's recognition that the adaptation of its existing human resource and enterprise bargaining systems to cover higher education staff works only as an interim solution, and that there is a need to develop stand-alone staffing policies and reward systems, and in particular, an academic promotions policy, for its higher education staff.

3.2.6 Staff Development and Performance Management

In embarking upon higher education delivery, BHI made the strategic decision to 'up skill' some of its VET teachers to assume higher education teaching duties. This has been done progressively through the creation of both internal professional development activities (such as participation in the Higher Education COP or in annual teaching symposia) and provision of support for staff to take advantage of external professional development opportunities, in particular, study for postgraduate qualifications. The Institute funded many of its staff to undertake a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education at Deakin University and a Master of Education at Monash University to enable its staff to upgrade their formal qualifications. At the time of the audit, 12 of the total of 30 BHI staff enrolled in one of these programs are higher education teachers. In addition, the Panel heard that some teaching staff have been supported in seeking a higher degree in their academic discipline. The budget for professional development of higher education staff in 2008 was not able to be disaggregated from the total Institute staff development budget of \$1.2 million; this will need to be addressed and reported on in future years.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends Box Hill Institute's commitment to developing an organisational capacity to provide higher education, through upgrading the qualifications of VET staff to teach in higher education.

The Allocation of Scheduled Duties pro forma serves as a basis for discussion between teachers and their supervisors regarding their work performance and professional development needs. Apart from this, BHI does not have a formal performance appraisal system for higher education teaching staff, although the Panel was told that provision has been made for this in the 2009 industrial agreement.

3.3 Support for Student Learning

The first of BHI's 'management platforms', 'Managing Students and Customers', promises that 'BHI will provide exemplary programs, customer service and support to its students and customers locally, nationally and internationally.'

The Panel found that support for students is generally good, but formed the view that the offerings of different support areas are not as well coordinated as they might be, with the result that it was difficult to get an overview of what services are actually available. Although it was not always possible to distinguish between support services generally and services especially targeted to higher education students, the decision to embed higher education services in the VET infrastructure appeared for the most part to ensure that higher education students had better access to a wider range of services than might otherwise be the case. This includes services provided by the International Student Services Office, the Centre for Student Administration and Learning Support Services, as well as library and IT resources and specialist equipment and facilities.

3.3.1 Identification of Student Characteristics

The Panel noted that, while the Institute keeps records about its student cohort to enable it to meet reporting compliance requirements, its management information systems and structures made it difficult to extract relevant higher education data centrally. As a result, data about the characteristics of its higher education students is dispersed among various teaching centres and administrative units and is not readily available to inform planning or evaluation. For example,

the Panel found that data on student members of equity groups is held by Student Services, but is not distributed to other related service areas. A recent move towards the centralisation of higher education data collections, by the Institute, should result in better data collections and reporting in the future.

3.3.2 Communication with Students

Orientation for new students is provided at both Institute and teaching centre levels. Student Services plays the major role, and the Library also participates. The Panel was impressed with the quality of information available to students through such publications as the Welcome Booklets for international students and the BHI Student Diary. However, it heard from students that they do not use the Diary, as it is focused on VET students and lacks a higher education timetable and information of pertinence to higher education students. Rather, they prefer to access information via the online learning management system, 'the Beehive', but reported that the system was often down and therefore unreliable. Generally, it appears that higher education students rely on communication within their course structures rather than on centralised sources, as these do not address their particular needs.

It also was apparent to the Panel that, although individual service areas seek feedback from students about their services, the processes used are largely informal and anecdotal, as are the opportunities to share the information thus gathered across support centres. The Panel enquired as to whether there are structures which provide a forum for increased coordination of needs analysis and service provision and was told that this is done at an annual planning retreat. The Panel felt that this situation could be improved upon and managed in a more systematic manner.

3.3.3 Learning Support and General Student Services

Provision of learning support is distributed across several central units, including Student Services and International Student Services. International students seemed to the Panel to be particularly well catered for.

The Degree Preparation Program, highlighted in BHI's Portfolio, is a two-day course designed to assist students to make the transition to higher education study. It was introduced in 2006 and attracts around half the entering cohort. The program covers topics such as reading and note-taking skills, oral and written communication and provides an introduction to some BHI policies. The Panel was told that the organisers seek student feedback each year and have made significant changes to the program as a result, but that it is not well coordinated with general orientation activities and the teaching centres are not as cooperative as they might be in steering incoming students to the program. Students told the Panel that they considered the program is not worthwhile, particularly for those who have completed Victorian Certificate of Education. The Panel concluded that in its present form, the Degree Preparation Program is not working and that it should be reviewed and rethought with reference to examples of successful transition programs at several of BHI's university partners.

Higher education students have access to the range of general student services offered by the Institute, including counselling and welfare services, social activities and commercial outlets. The students the Panel met had little to say about these services, as most did not choose to use them. Food services on campus are felt to be generally good, but there were complaints about limited access to the Institute bookshop, whose brief opening hours clashed with class schedules.

3.4 Facilities and Infrastructure

'Managing Infrastructure', the third of the Institute's 'management platforms' sets the objective that BHI 'will have appropriate, safe and environmentally sustainable infrastructure, technology and equipment.'

3.4.1 Facilities

BHI's higher education courses are spread across several of its campuses, and enjoy varying standards of accommodation and equipment, most of which serve the needs of both VET and higher education students.

Generally, specialist equipment, for example in music and biotechnology, is of recent vintage and industry or near-industry standard, and the Panel heard from students in several discipline areas how much they appreciated being able to use such sophisticated equipment in their studies. The Panel also heard of plans for the development of state-of-the-art facilities, including a 'simulated hospital' for planned VET and higher education programs in nursing. Nevertheless, many of the students interviewed by the Panel identified a need to improve facilities and increase the space available to higher education activities.

3.4.2 Registry and Records

The introduction of higher education had a significant impact on the operations of BHI's Registry and the Panel heard of the many new systems and procedures it had to put into place to accommodate the introduction of degrees and the associated recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

The Institute currently uses an in-house student records management system known as SMART to maintain both its VET and its higher education student information. The system is designed primarily for VET use, and higher education needs must be accommodated through the development of plug-in modules which, it was reported, do not all provide the full functionality needed to support sophisticated higher education records management and reporting. At the time of the audit, BHI was involved in a tender process on behalf of Skills Victoria to develop a new student management system for Victorian TAFE and Higher Education providers. The Panel concurred that a new, more appropriate system would be beneficial and necessary to support the future expansion of higher education delivery.

3.5 Information Resources

3.5.1 Library

BHI has three main libraries, on its Elgar, Nelson and Whitehorse campuses. While the collections are only just adequate to support higher education students and staff, and students expressed dissatisfaction at limited opening hours, the Panel heard that the Library has been taking steps to increase its capacity to support the expansion of higher education and respond to student needs. Higher education liaison librarians have been appointed, reciprocal borrowing rights established with other TAFE and university libraries, and a modest budget line earmarked for higher education collection development. The Panel heard that the Library has put forward a major plan for restructuring library services and facilities. It has budgeted for improved opening hours in 2010, and will be undertaking a major benchmarking exercise.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute's identification of the need to upgrade library facilities, policy and planning and the action Box Hill Institute is taking towards that end.

3.5.2 Information Technology

The Panel was given only very limited information about information technology resources available to support higher education activities. The topic was not covered in the Portfolio, and basic data, such as availability of general use computer labs or student-to-computer ratios, was not available. Students are able to access BHI's website by logging in from their home computers and wireless connectivity on campus, currently rather limited, is to be expanded. Seriously inadequate bandwidth has been a significant problem and was the subject of student criticism, but the Panel was pleased to learn that plans are in hand to significantly increase the Institute's IT capability in the near future.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

This chapter provides comment on the overarching quality systems at BHI. In general, the Panel found that while a commitment to continuous quality improvement is well established in the Institute's governance and management structures, its quality systems are still largely informal and loosely interconnected, and as yet unsupported by robust data, reporting and accountability measures.

4.1 *BHI Quality Strategy*

The Institute's Portfolio provided a detailed overview of the 'BHI Quality Strategy', including associated feedback loops and 'quality principles'. The Quality Strategy is seen to have been 'created in line with the Institute's strategic objectives', representing 'an evolving and iterative process which, with feedback through a review cycle, encourages and ensures continuous improvement' (PF p33). The Panel found, however, that the strategy is essentially a conceptual approach to continuous quality improvement rather than a documented action plan.

The Panel noted the existence of a 'Quality Framework for Degrees and Associate Degrees', prepared in 2006 by an external consultant, which is identified in the self-study as a 'key aspect' of BHI's approach to quality for higher education, outlining 'the Institute's approach to course planning, subject design and development, course monitoring and review and evaluation of teaching and learning' (PF, p 34). The Panel could not, however, find evidence that the Framework had been translated into policy at any point, and most staff with whom the Panel spoke are unaware of its existence. Rather, it appeared to be a professional development module or resource manual developed to guide BHI in the early roll-out of higher education.

An interim Quality Policy dated July 2008 provided a compilation of definitions, principles and desired practices but did not clearly commit to implementation and monitoring of those practices, leaving the Panel with the impression that work is still required to turn the Quality Strategy into a fully-implemented program.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute's progress towards defining a quality strategy for higher education.

4.2 *Quality Management*

Currently, the central focal point for quality management at the Institute resides in the Quality and Continuous Improvement Committee (QACI), which reports to the BHI Executive Committee and is chaired by the Executive Manager, Corporate Governance. Higher education is represented on QACI by the three senior leaders with portfolio responsibilities for higher education. QACI works to an annual plan and makes a significant contribution to driving BHI's quality agenda forward.

QACI is overseeing the development of an online quality management system (QMS), due to go live in 2009, with a higher education capability to be introduced in 2010. QACI has also overseen the introduction of an independent, internal quality audit program. The Panel learned that the audits conducted thus far do not differentiate between VET and higher education activities except where this is required for compliance purposes, such as ESOS reporting.

The management of quality improvement at lower levels in the organisation remains more diffuse, although the strengthening quality-monitoring role played within the academic governance structure by HEBOS and the CACs has been commented on earlier. While each teaching centre and section is 'responsible for implementing internal and external quality improvement practices, frameworks and standards' (PF p34), the Panel could not ascertain how this took place in practice, or how outcomes are reported and accountabilities monitored. The Panel heard that it is expected that the online QMS will monitor accountabilities for quality across the Institute and found it difficult to understand how this would occur.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute take steps to define its approach to quality and quality standards for higher education, clarify accountabilities and expectations and communicate these to all staff.

4.3 Monitoring Outcomes

In its quest for data illustrating the scope, characteristics and performance of the Institute's higher education courses and activities, the Panel found that much of the Institute's information is anecdotal in nature and collected and maintained at unit level, with informal and often ad hoc reporting of outcomes in the meetings of various management committees. The lack of explicit coverage of higher education in the Institute's strategic and operational plans and key performance indicators (KPIs) further complicates its ability to monitor higher education outcomes, and from this data to develop its higher education capability and associated culture. While small enrolments to date have made a measure of informal oversight possible, such an approach to managing information (vital to the institution's ability to monitor its own performance) is neither sustainable nor in line with good practice.

Recommendation 14

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute specifies broad-based key performance indicators for higher education which are reflective of planning objectives, and which are reported on regularly.

These KPIs may be introduced in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan, and should support the attainment of critical mass in higher education.

As noted in chapter 1, HEBOS has been progressively moving to strengthen its ability to monitor the academic performance of BHI's higher education courses and has recently introduced a standardised reporting format for teaching centres' annual reports, including statistical data related to student enrolments, grade distributions, progression and completions. Standardised unit evaluation templates are being implemented by QACI, and plans are well advanced for the introduction of the Graduate Destination Survey for higher education graduates. These initiatives reflect a realisation by BHI that it needs to move beyond reliance on anecdotal and localised feedback to formalise the use of consistent data and documentation at all levels. In addition, the Panel heard that the Institution was increasing its capacity to monitor and interrogate higher education performance data. Further, the introduction of the online QMS will provide BHI with a management information system capability, for both vocational and higher education quality activities, and should contribute to the achievement of the Institute's strategic objectives for higher education.

Recommendation 15

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute's data and management information systems to support higher education development be linked to quality management and planning.

Furthermore, a recent move towards the centralisation of higher education data collections by the Institute, through the development of an academic planning and research function should result in better coordinated higher education data collections and reporting in the future. This will require the development of policies, centralising and standardising the data collection and reporting function, and increasing BHI's capability to monitor higher education outcomes.

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms Box Hill Institute's recognition of the need to improve its ability to collect and extract data for evaluating the educational effectiveness of its higher education programs.

4.4 Benchmarking

As previously noted, a number of external benchmarking relationships with other TAFEs and some universities are either functioning or planned in several academic areas, and HEBOS has called upon all teaching centres to identify and use a benchmarking partner. Indeed, the Panel found that benchmarking is largely decentralised and frequently looks to comparisons with dual sector universities. This is an appropriate first step. Current moves to centralise and bed down the Institute's quality strategy could fruitfully be supported by more extensive benchmarking networks and through such developments as the introduction of the Graduate Destination Survey.

Recommendation 16

AUQA recommends that Box Hill Institute adopt more robust external higher education references at all levels of management and governance, to ensure breadth and depth of understanding of higher education and to provide benchmarks to support the setting of standards and the interpretation of outcomes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: BOX HILL INSTITUTE

History and Location

In 1984, Box Hill College of TAFE (name later changed via Victorian Government legislation to Box Hill Institute of TAFE) was established to deliver vocational education and training to students (PF p45.)

Box Hill Institute is one of Australia's premier, multipurpose TAFE institutes that prides itself on its ability to deliver a broad range of vocational education and training services.

The Institute has four main campuses located within easy reach of Melbourne's central business district. Box Hill Institute boasts a proud record of innovation in teaching and has outstanding facilities. The Institute's commitment to provide the best facilities is underpinned by the \$19.5m Elgar Development, which was opened in 2005.

Box Hill Institute offers over 400 full-time and part-time courses covering a wide range of subject disciplines and delivery methods, as well as around 300 short courses. All courses provide students with a variety of pathways to employment, promotion and further tertiary study.

Now delivering TAFE degrees in applied music, computer systems (networking), hospitality management and biotechnology & innovation, the Institute has more than 35,000 student enrolments each year with an increasing number coming from overseas.

Academic Profile

The introduction of higher education programs into BHI commenced with the Victorian Government's 2002 ministerial statement inviting submissions from the TAFE institutes to deliver degrees in niche markets on a fee-for-service basis. The Minister expected that these degrees would be strongly vocational in focus and show clear linkages to the training package competencies in the relevant industry sector (PF p01). BHI's initial three degree programs were accredited by the VRQA's antecedent body in 2004, with first student intakes in 2005 and 2006. By 2008, higher education enrolments totaled 505 (headcount), out of the Institute's total student load of 40,675. In 2009, the Institute offered eight associate and five bachelor degree courses across six discipline areas: computing, hospitality, commerce, fashion, music, biotechnology (PF pp44-45). Further courses were under development, with three new courses undergoing VRQA accreditation at the time of the audit. Staff teaching in degree programs in 2009 numbered 15 full-time and 19 part-time permanent teachers and four full-time and 54 part-time sessional or contract teachers. There were six full-time heads of higher education (PF p48).

BHI Vision, Mission, Values and Commitments

Our Vision

Box Hill Institute will be Australia's number one global vocational education and training provider.

Our Mission

Box Hill Institute exists to provide Training and Education to meet the workforce development needs of the communities we serve by developing skills which enable students to participate and optimise opportunities in the employment market and which enable enterprises to be competitive, sustainable and successful in the market place.

Our Values

Box Hill Institute adopts the following values to underpin and guide its day-to-day activity and future development:

Integrity

We will operate ethically, reliably and honestly

Excellence

We will exceed expectations and strive to be the best we can be

Care and Respect

We will provide a caring and understanding environment, acknowledging each others individuality and differences

Differentiation

We will be leaders in our fields and create unique points of difference that set what we do apart from other education and training providers

Our Commitments

Box Hill Institute is committed to the following:

Students

Providing students with excellence in teaching, a positive learning environment and the opportunity to excel in the global employment market

Skills

Providing industry and the community with the highest skills which will develop capability and achieve global competitiveness

Staff

Providing a working environment that attracts staff, nurtures leaders and encourages excellence and a global outlook

Service

Service excellence in everything we do

Source: BHI 2008-2012 Strategic Plan Summary

Box Hill Institute Higher Education Enrolments 2009

Course title	Duration (months)	2009 Headcount	2009 EFTSL
Associate Degree in Biotechnology	24	11	6.6
Associate Degree in Commerce	24	36	30.9
Associate Degree in Computer Systems (Networking)	24	2	1.9
Associate Degree in Fashion Technology	24	14	12.9
Associate Degree in Applied Music (Performance)	24	0	0
Bachelor of Applied Business in Music Industry	36	45	44.5
Bachelor of Applied Music (Performance)	36	149	124.2
Bachelor of Applied Music (Musical Theatre)	36	16	12.5
Bachelor of Applied Music (Audio Production)	36	56	46.9
Bachelor of Applied Music (Composition)	36	55	45.1
Bachelor of Biotechnology and Innovation	36	34	31.3
Bachelor of Computer Systems (Networking)	36	108	100.9
Bachelor of Hospitality Management	36	45	35.9
Total	-	571	493.4

Source: Box Hill Institute Data Collections 2009

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

Mission

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

Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

Vision

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

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

Values

In its external relations, AUQA will be:

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

APPENDIX C: THE JOINT AUDIT AND REGISTRATION PANEL

Australian Universities Quality Agency:

Dr Anne L Martin, Higher Education Consultant (Chair)

Ms Karen Treloar, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Victorian Recognition and Qualifications Authority:

Associate Professor Dianne Bolton, Director Postgraduate Programs, Swinburne University of Technology, Lilydale Campus

Professor Rodger Eade, Director, Office of the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, Victoria University

VRQA support:

Mr Greg Deakin, Manager, Quality Assurance Higher Education, Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
BHI	Box Hill Institute
CAC	Course Advisory Committee
COP	communities of practice
DEEWR	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL	equivalent full-time student load
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students as in the <i>Education Services for Overseas Services Act 2000</i>
FEE-HELP	FEE-HELP is a loan given to eligible fee-paying students to help pay part or all of their tuition fees.
FTE	full-time effective
GAA	government accrediting authority
HEBOS	Higher Education Board of Studies
HEIMS	Higher Education Information Management System
HEP(s)	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
Institute	Box Hill Institute
IT	information technology
KPIs	key performance indicators
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now disbanded)
National Protocols	<i>National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
ADRI	Approach-Deployment-Results-Improvement
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio	Performance Portfolio
QACI	Quality and Continuous Improvement Committee
QAFs	Quality Audit Factors
QMS	quality management system
SAI(s)	self-accrediting institution(s)
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TNE	transnational education
VET	vocational education and training
VRQA	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority