

# AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of  
University of Canberra

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 *Audit Findings*

The scope for the 2008 audit of the University of Canberra ('UC' or 'the University') is the two themes of 'Renewal of the University' and 'Internationalisation', together with follow-up of selected recommendations from the 2003 AUQA Audit Report. This Report includes comments on other significant matters, including the University's compliance with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*.

AUQA's detailed findings on the University's actions to quality assure and improve its standards and outcomes are contained in sections 2 to 4. Data that support the findings are provided in section 5. Information on the conduct of the audit is at Appendix A.

Within the scope of the particular audit, AUQA's Cycle 2 audits emphasise institutional standards and performance outcomes, with attention to benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes. However, due to special circumstances at the University, AUQA agreed partially to vary its approach to the UC Cycle 2 audit. At the time of the 2008 AUQA audit, the University was midway through a renewal project involving the academic, administrative and organisational aspects of the University, and nominated this as one of the audit's two themes. To use the audit as an opportunity to reflect on its approach to the wide-ranging review and restructure, the University suggested that this audit focus on the way in which it is approaching its renewal plans and that AUQA conduct a follow-up audit three years later. That audit will examine how these new directions have been implemented, the outcomes achieved and the extent to which the renewal project has led to demonstrable improvements. AUQA agreed to this proposal and therefore, this Report focuses primarily on the University's 'approach' with respect to the theme of 'Renewal of the University'. Wherever possible, areas in which changes are being implemented have also been considered, recognising that 'renewal' is a work in progress. The 2011 AUQA audit should follow up the continuing implementation and outcomes of the current approaches.

Since the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor in March 2007, the University has been engaged in eight separate but interrelated reform processes. The reforms respond to both the strategic need for a new vision for the University and the difficult financial situation in which the University found itself. As a result of the reforms, many of the University's systems and structures were either new or in the process of being reorganised at the time of the Audit Visit. AUQA recognises that this Report reflects a moment in the University's evolutionary development and that some observations of this Report will have been overtaken by events by the time the Report becomes public.

#### 1.1.1 Matters from Cycle 1 Audit

The University of Canberra has introduced a number of changes to its quality systems and processes since Cycle 1. While the developments in general are encouraging, it will take a few years to see the results and they need careful monitoring.

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report had a cluster of recommendations around research and research training (recommendations 8–12) and they were selected for further follow-up. The 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended that the University pay further attention to the classification of

'active researchers', 'areas of research strength', 'research', 'commercial research', and 'consultancy', as well as to the handling of complaints relating to supervision, and the allocation of resources for research training. AUQA found that these issues have not all been fully addressed, and that a number of the actions that have been taken are not fully understood by staff. In particular, issues still remain with respect to higher degree by research (HDR) supervision, honours level teaching, appeals mechanism and progress reporting.

AUQA considered the research strategies envisaged in the new Strategic Plan (2008–12). The current research outcomes indicate that the University should assess how achievable its research targets are within the planned timelines and clarify the strategic directions to staff with matching funding allocations to strengthen research capability at various levels.

### 1.1.2 Theme 1: Renewal of the University

The new ten-year vision and the Strategic Plan 2008-12 have boosted the morale of the campus community. There is widespread acceptance of this vision among the internal and external stakeholders. This Report commends the University community for enthusiastically embracing needed change and the University leadership for creating this positive institutional climate through excellent communication. However, to avoid the risk of change fatigue among staff and to ensure adequate momentum and continuity in implementation, UC should prioritise and implement the new initiatives in stages.

The University has conceptualised a broad quality framework and developed a Quality Portfolio that is intended progressively to document quality assurance measures that have been put in place related to core University processes. Considering that the Quality Portfolio is very much a work in progress which requires concerted monitoring, AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra strengthen the oversight arrangements for quality management.

The University Council has many new external members in its membership. Six of the nine external positions on the Council that fell vacant at the end of June 2008 were filled by the Australian Capital Territory Government in October. The new Council should note that, at this critical juncture in its development, UC needs a high level of involvement and strong oversight by its Council, especially with respect to its financial and management performance. The University should ensure, as a matter of priority, that the information provided to the Council and to senior management on the performance of the University is accurate, comprehensive and at the appropriate level of detail to support informed decision making.

The University has taken appropriate steps to renew its academic profile and strengthen the development and implementation of its courses including the establishment of the potentially effective new role of the associate deans of education and this Report has a commendation on this.

Academic governance in the University is still developing. There is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the major groups that share academic governance with the Academic Board. Although this is largely due to the academic renewal process and will settle down in time, at present, this is resulting in significant variation in implementation of policies and procedures. The University is relying more on individuals than on systems to implement its change agenda and core business. While this is understandable in the current context, it is not sustainable and this Report has recommendations addressing this.

AUQA found that the University needs to pay attention to its capability planning, in particular the development of workload and workforce planning. It should implement a systematic performance development and management system.

The University has estimated that its 39 Step Strategy will cost about \$100m to fully implement. The University proposes to raise this amount through increased student fee revenue, grants, income generated by the foundation programs and the proceeds of campus development. While acknowledging the confidence and conviction the University has about resource mobilisation, it is important to develop a contingency plan in the event of any shortfall in the planned investment. The University should also proceed as a matter of priority in addressing the key findings of the diagnostic review of its financial performance relating to revenue, expenditure, cash flow and other matters germane to the future viability of the University. Developing business continuity plans is another area that needs urgent attention.

The strategies the University has begun to put in place to support academic renewal have the potential to ensure that academic standards at UC are maintained and enhanced. The University's approach to monitoring academic standards is encouraging, but implementation is still evolving.

The University has recently changed its selected benchmarking peer group to one which will provide it with stretch targets. It demonstrates good progress on attention to performance measures and outcomes but needs to ensure balance between quantitative and qualitative measures.

### 1.1.3 Theme 2: Internationalisation

As part of its reorganisation of administrative services, the University has significantly restructured the areas responsible for management of its international portfolio. The new management arrangements for overseeing international activities rely upon a management model of shared responsibilities. The International Education Committee, established recently, has a key and revitalising role in the achievement of the International Plan. The University needs to monitor closely whether the Committee's terms of reference are strong enough to ensure adequate management of academic and reputational risk.

The University has worked through the recommendations of an external review to ensure that it is fully compliant with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act). Risk and crisis management procedures for staff and students, on and offshore are in place. The University should develop a holistic evaluation framework to regularly evaluate, analyse and improve domestic and international and transnational student experiences.

An area that has not received adequate attention, but has been noted by the University for future action, is internationalisation of the curriculum. This Report affirms the University's plans to implement a consistent approach to the internationalisation of the curriculum as appropriate to the different disciplines and programs, incorporating student mobility and exchange opportunities.

The University offers transnational programs through a range of different teaching models. While in general quality assurance measures for transnational education (TNE) programs are in place at the course level, making improvements based on moderation and course review reports needs attention. With a new faculty structure in place and a significant number of new deans and a devolved management model that positions the faculties as key operational units, the University needs to act quickly to clarify its TNE aspirations and provide the faculties with

effective quality assurance mechanisms. There is some evidence of comparison of grades and academic standards with the relevant Bruce Campus cohort, but more attention needs to be given to this.

UC should address the language issues related to bilingual teaching, annotation of the testamur and English language requirements and make the outcomes and policies clear to all parties involved.

A clear University policy for the termination of TNE agreements and procedural guidelines covering teach-out arrangements for students needs to be developed as a matter of urgency.

Many aspects that contribute to enhancing academic standards are either undergoing changes or very new. There is a lack of consistency across programs and units in some cases. Policies and practices on moderation, staff development and monitoring academic performance are some such aspects. The International Education Committee and the Academic Board need to play a greater role in ensuring robustness and consistency in monitoring academic standards in international activities.

#### 1.1.4 National Protocols

*The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* require all universities to meet a range of criteria, in particular, nationally agreed criteria for all higher education institutions (A1 to A10) and criteria for universities (D1 to D5). The Protocols were adopted only relatively recently, in 2007. Therefore, at the beginning of Cycle 2 audits, in 2008, institutions are only beginning to undertake specific checking of the extent of their compliance with the Protocols. On the evidence considered by the Panel, AUQA believes that UC satisfies the criteria of the National Protocols. However, AUQA has noted some potential for problems with UC's adherence to some of the criteria of the National Protocols, in particular criteria A5 and A6 that relate to having sufficient financial and human resources to sustain the institution's programs into the future. The University has an ambitious plan to raise \$100m to fund its 39 Step Strategy. An external financial diagnostics report and the University's recent financial performance indicate that the Council will need to monitor closely the University's progress in strengthening its financial position. The 2011 AUQA audit should check that these matters in relation to compliance have been fully addressed. Observations about these will be touched on where appropriate under the relevant themes.

#### 1.1.5 Other External Reference Points

The University has considered the *AVCC Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities* while developing its policies and procedures. The University has been found to comply with the ESOS Act, and the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (the National Code).

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

- the Australian Qualifications Framework
- Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio
- Course Experience Questionnaire
- Graduate Destination Survey
- Association of Commonwealth Universities Benchmarking Program

With reference to these external reference points, AUQA has not identified any issues that might affect the quality of UC's educational activities.

## **1.2 Strategic Context**

When the new Vice-Chancellor assumed office in March 2007, the University of Canberra was facing difficult challenges due to declining student numbers, budgetary shortfalls and management systems that required improvements. To overcome the challenges and to build on the strengths, under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, with the support of the Council and the senior management, the University developed a new vision statement informed by significant reviews and underpinned by various plans and policies. The ten-year vision for the University and its campus recommits the University to serving its community and seeks to leverage its position in Australia's capital city.

Towards realising the refocused vision, the University developed a new Strategic Plan for 2008–12 that lists five strategies supported by 39 Steps. The Plan specifies targets to be achieved by 2018 and aspires to achieve those in two stages, with the first stage targeting developments for the period 2008 to 2012. The University states that in the period covered by the Plan, it will strengthen the organisation's foundations, increase student numbers to 9000 full-time equivalents, consolidate its ranked position on educational indicators, improve its research performance and engage more effectively with its constituencies. It has plans to invest \$100 million during this period, in addition to its normal operating revenues, to implement the strategies. Many of the University activities are driven by these strategic goals, which form a context for the major audit conclusions recorded in this Report.

## **1.3 Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations**

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

The themes for Cycle 2 audits are chosen for their risk potential and at least one theme reflects the institution's own assessment of its developmental and strategic needs. For this reason, Cycle 2 audit reports may contain more recommendations and affirmations than commendations. This is particularly important in the case of the University of Canberra due to the fundamental and wide-ranging changes the University was undergoing at the time of the audit. As a result, AUQA has made many affirmations and recommendations to assist the University in moving forward in its renewal project. As was the case with AUQA's Cycle 1 audits, this Report aims to assist the University to enhance the quality and standards of its operations.

**Commendations**

- 1. AUQA commends the University of Canberra for recognising that its current stage of reform meant that the University would be best served by having a two-stage AUQA audit. ....12
- 2. AUQA commends the University of Canberra community for enthusiastically embracing needed change and the University leadership for creating a positive institutional climate through excellent communication. ....12
- 3. AUQA commends the University of Canberra for its ten-year vision that recommits the University to serving its community. ....13
- 4. AUQA commends the steps taken by the University of Canberra to renew its academic profile and strengthen the development and provision of its courses including the establishment of the new role of the associate deans of education. ....18

**Affirmations**

- 1. AUQA affirms the steps being taken by the University of Canberra to enhance institutional performance reporting to the University Council and to the senior management to support informed decision-making in the discharge of their responsibilities. ....16
- 2. (urgent) AUQA affirms the University of Canberra’s intention to develop its capability plan, in particular the development of workload and workforce planning, policies and principles. ....20
- 3. (urgent) AUQA affirms the initiatives of the University of Canberra to implement a systematic performance development and management system across academic and professional staff to align faculty and unit performance with the Strategic Plan and corporate KPIs. ....21
- 4. (urgent) AUQA affirms that the University of Canberra continue to follow through with actions arising from the recommendations of the PhillipsKPA report, in particular, and as a matter of priority the actions relating to business planning, asset strategic planning and cash flow modelling. ....22
- 5. AUQA affirms the intent of the University of Canberra to ensure renewed staff commitment and engagement in its International Plan and goals. ....26
- 6. AUQA affirms the University of Canberra’s plans to implement a consistent approach to internationalisation of the curriculum as appropriate to the different disciplines and programs, incorporating student mobility and exchange opportunities. ....29
- 7. AUQA affirms the intentions of the University of Canberra to enhance systematic monitoring of academic performance of international and transnational students at the University level. ....36

## **Recommendations**

1. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra address the intent of the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommendations and ensure that the earlier lack of follow-through is not repeated with the recommendations in the 2008 AUQA Audit Report. ....8
2. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra strengthen the oversight mechanisms for quality management to enable attention to quality at this critical time of systems and governance and strategy change. ....15
3. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra clarify academic governance operating procedures, including the new Council subcommittees, Academic Board priorities, and faculty boards' roles and responsibilities to ensure strong and consistent implementation. ....19
4. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a contingency plan to address the impact on strategic planning targets that could occur as a result of any shortfall in income from planned campus development. ....21
5. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra ensure that business continuity plans are developed for the University's critical activities, in particular those areas that rely heavily on enterprise system applications. ....22
6. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop an English language proficiency policy that takes into account access and admissions, and post admission support strategies for staff and students. ....28
7. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a holistic evaluation framework and cycle within which domestic, onshore international and transnational student experience is regularly evaluated, analysed, compared and improved upon. ....29
8. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra clarify its transnational education strategy and objectives, taking into account more robust budget models; considerations of academic and program sustainability; and quality and compliance requirements both Australian and in country jurisdictions. ....34
9. AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a standard and required induction program for staff teaching offshore. ....35

## 2 MATTERS FROM AUDIT CYCLE 1

Recognising the importance of quality enhancement and improvement, the Cycle 2 audits consider whether the recommendations and affirmations in the Cycle 1 AUQA audit report have been implemented. A sample of recommendations and affirmations is selected and checked. AUQA also seeks evidence of the increasing effectiveness of the institution's quality assurance and improvement system since Cycle 1.

### 2.1 *Changes to Quality Systems and Processes since Cycle 1*

The University of Canberra has introduced a number of changes to its quality systems and processes since the Cycle 1 AUQA audit including the 2005 restructure of the academic program. Some of the more recent initiatives include the new quality framework and the quality profile. While these developments are encouraging, it will take a few years to see the results. More observations about these initiatives are given under theme 1 (section 3).

### 2.2 *Implementation of Cycle 1 Recommendations*

At the time of the 2008 AUQA audit, the University was midway through a renewal project involving the academic, administrative and organisational aspects of the University. As a result, many of the University's systems and structures were either new or in the process of being restructured. This made it difficult to form a view on the adequacy of past actions taken to address some of the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommendations. In a number of instances, systems previously put into place in response to specific recommendations have since been overtaken by new strategic imperatives.

Even allowing for this, the Panel formed the impression that UC has not, in the past, had a strong culture of follow-through or a consistent understanding that administrative and academic units are accountable for implementing agreed university plans and policies. This impression led the Panel to question whether the same outcome would befall the current initiatives and to focus on identifying what systems are being put in place to ensure that this does not happen. After a careful consideration of arrangements at the time of its visit, AUQA urges the University to give priority to ensuring successful implementation of the current planning initiatives that address the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommendations.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra address the intent of the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommendations and ensure that the earlier lack of follow-through is not repeated with the recommendations in the 2008 AUQA Audit Report.**

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report had clusters of recommendations around governance and academic oversight, research and research training, and student support. The Panel covered the recommendations on governance and academic oversight under theme 1 on 'Renewal of the University' and the recommendations on student support with reference to international students were covered under theme 2 on 'Internationalisation'. Adequacy and effectiveness of actions taken on those aspects is discussed under the relevant themes; the observations related to 'research and research training' are given in section 2.3.

## **2.3 Recommendations on Research and Research Training**

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended that the University pay further attention to several issues, some of which have been addressed, while others are still outstanding. Also a number of the actions that have been taken are not fully understood by staff.

### **2.3.1 Active Researcher**

In response to the recommendation that the 'Active Researcher' categories be tightened (Recommendation 8), in 2007, the University introduced a new classification scheme referred to as 'Researcher Activity Levels'. As a result, there is greater clarity among staff about the points assigned to research income, research publications and HDR completions.

### **2.3.2 Research Strengths**

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended: *That the University of Canberra take steps to resolve an apparent tension between its chosen developmental strategy of encouraging commercial research capacity on a relatively broad front, while simultaneously cultivating niche areas of national and international research competitiveness* (Recommendation 9). To address this Recommendation, in 2004, the University initiated a review of its Areas of Research Strength. The review led to the identification of three types of research areas, namely University Research Centres, Research Areas of High Potential and Research Areas, for enhanced support. While the review has resulted in a focused identification of areas of research strength, its impact on the management of research funding has raised some concerns among staff. For more observations on this issue see section 2.4.

### **2.3.3 Consultancy**

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended: *That 'there be a clearer definition of, and differentiation between, 'research', 'commercial research' and 'consultancy' at the University of Canberra, as distinctive categories for the prioritisation of research activity* (Recommendation 10). The Panel was advised that the 2004 review of UC's Areas of Research Strength addressed this issue and that the Research Services Office was assisting with the clarification of income categories. The Panel was informed that the University wishes to encourage funding from all four DEEWR categories.

### **2.3.4 Research Supervision**

While the above-mentioned actions have addressed some of the 2003 recommendations to a large extent, the needed improvements in the area of research training (recommendations 11 and 12) remain to be addressed. In particular, issues still remain with respect to HDR supervision, honours level teaching, appeals mechanism and progress reporting.

HDR related issues are overseen by the University Research Committee following procedures outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Policy and Procedures, called the 'Gold Book'. HDR administrative processes are managed by the Student and Academic Services Research Students' Office. Research management is overseen at an operational level by the Research Services Office and, at a strategic level, by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Research). Although the Gold Book was revised in 2005 to provide for confidential complaint reporting for research students, due to the academic restructure and the consequent volatility as the new structures bedded down, the research students are not clear about the pathways for seeking support or addressing grievances. At the time of the Audit Visit, the Panel learned that, to reflect the changes to the academic structures, some sections of the Gold Book had just been updated. The

University should finalise the updates to the Gold Book as soon as possible and ensure that the research students are aware of the current version.

Overall, AUQA found that the 2003 recommendations relating to research and research training still remain to be adequately addressed. The new Strategic Plan (2008–12) and the actions triggered by it add another level of complexity to these recommendations and the observations related to that are given below.

#### **2.4 *The New Strategic Directions for Research***

The vision of the University for research is that its 'research and creative practices will be applied to making the world a better and more secure place for all its inhabitants'. The University wishes to achieve this vision in two stages and in stage 1 one of the five strategies in the Strategic Plan (2008–12) is that the University '...perform in the top half of universities on per capita research measures'.

To progress in its strategic direction, UC has developed a Research and Research Training Plan that lists a series of specific initiatives, each with performance indicators, targets, responsibilities and completion dates. The Panel heard expressions of concern about whether some of the aspirations indicated in the Strategic Plan and the corresponding targets are achievable within planned timelines.

The key initiatives of the Research and Research Training Plan include creating a workload model that rewards research success and encourages early career researchers. To achieve this, the academic workload principles and promotion policy of the University are currently under consideration. The Panel was informed that the current developments provide early career researchers with sufficient time to establish a sustainable research base and also give consideration to the research outcomes of established researchers. While these developments seem to be on the right track, there is not a clear understanding of this strategy among staff.

The Panel heard concerns that the current emphasis on research concentrations and selectivity of research areas for funding strategically might mean that some programs aimed at developing and maintaining research capability which have been successful in the past may be lost. While such fears are not uncommon in institutions which have adopted a more strategic approach to supporting research, the University needs to verify that it is maintaining adequate capacity for the development of emerging areas. The University should act quickly to clarify the strategies and communicate the developments to staff and allay concerns about inequitable recognition of and support for their research efforts.

The new budget model under development is based on research outcomes where the faculties will have to negotiate performance targets. While this approach might enhance attention to research outcomes, given that in recent years the research performance of the University has declined in many areas, the University should assess its research capabilities more accurately and identify ways to strengthen its strategic priorities further.

In terms of research income, though Category 1 income is showing an increase, it is generated by only a small proportion of staff. The Portfolio states that top 20 ranked staff were responsible for 88% of research income which represents a major issue the University has to address (PF 2.2 p11). Total research income, HDR load per full-time equivalent (FTE) and HDR completions per FTE have declined relative to the other universities with which UC is benchmarking (data items 5.1 & 5.2). The data on research publications is encouraging (Data item 5.3). These outcomes indicate that the University should ensure it has assessed its research capability more accurately

and clarify its strategic directions to staff with matching funding allocations to strengthen research capability at various levels.

### 3 THEME: RENEWAL OF THE UNIVERSITY

In 2007, UC proposed the theme 'Academic Governance' with particular emphasis on the subtheme 'Quality Management System' for its Cycle 2 audit. By then, the University had initiated a wide-ranging review and restructure and it wished to use the AUQA audit as an opportunity to reflect on the approach it has taken to restructure. AUQA's own risk analysis, that considered the future directions and the strategic plan of the University among other things, found this to be a suitable theme.

Considering the timing and scope of the restructure, the University suggested that the 2008 audit focus on 'approach' and that AUQA conduct a follow-up audit three years later in relation to 'deployment, results and improvement'. AUQA agreed to this proposal and therefore, this Report focuses on approach for this theme. Wherever possible, areas of 'deployment' have also been considered, recognising that 'renewal' is a work in progress. The 2011 AUQA audit will follow up the outcomes of the current approaches. AUQA, in agreeing to this approach, acknowledges the University's commitment to achieving necessary improvements to its critical areas of operations.

#### Commendation 1

**AUQA commends the University of Canberra for recognising that its current stage of reform meant that the University would be best served by having a two-stage AUQA audit.**

In the Portfolio that was submitted in July 2008, the University had taken a broad interpretation of the theme 'Academic Governance with emphasis on the Quality Management System' and portrayed the theme as the 'Renewal of the University'. AUQA accepted that interpretation but also gave considerable attention to academic governance.

#### 3.1 *The Context*

Since the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor (VC) in March 2007, the University has been engaged in eight separate but interrelated reform processes involving the academic, administrative and organisational aspects of the University. The reforms respond to both the strategic need for a new vision for the University and the difficult financial situation in which the University found itself. As a result of the reforms, many of the University's systems and structures were either new or in the process of being reorganised at the time of the Audit Visit.

Despite the sometimes destabilising impact of such extensive and rapid change, the Panel encountered a positive institutional climate at UC. Staff attributed this in large part to the VC's commitment to open and frequent communication and the energy he has brought to fostering staff support for the renewal plans. The Panel heard of many instances of the Vice-Chancellor and the senior management providing opportunities, both formal and informal, to discuss the restructure. The restructure has kindled a sense of optimism among staff about the new direction the University is taking and with it an increasing sense of institutional identity.

#### Commendation 2

**AUQA commends the University of Canberra community for enthusiastically embracing needed change and the University leadership for creating a positive institutional climate through excellent communication.**

### **3.2 The New Strategic Planning and Quality Framework**

The University asserts that 2007–08 has been a period of great significance for the University. This period is marked by a number of reforms that aim to help the University overcome the difficulties it was facing due to declining student numbers, budgetary constraints and management systems that required improvements. To overcome the challenges and to build on the strengths the University developed a ten-year vision statement informed by significant reviews and underpinned by various plans and policies.

#### **3.2.1 The Vision of the University**

The University commissioned a number of significant external reviews that were instrumental in assisting the University to shape its response to its operating difficulties. These included, in 2007, a situation analysis to provide a comprehensive review of the University's performance in recent years and an overview of population and workforce trends that are likely to have a direct impact on the University. In the same year, the University commissioned a high level diagnostic review of its financial performance to review and restate, as necessary, the University's budget for 2007.

Informed by these reviews, UC has developed a distinctive ten-year vision for the University and its campus that recommit the University to serving its community and seeks to leverage its position in Australia's capital city. This has attracted strong external support from community and government leaders.

The vision of the University is to become internationally recognised, by 2018, 'for its research-led education in public administration and services; whether those services be governmental, environmental, educational, health-related, creative or in the course of business.' It aspires to draw students and researchers from around the world because of its 'reputation for programs which meet the current needs of modern governments, public services and the professions which support them' (Strategic Plan 2008–12 p5). The Panel found widespread acceptance of this vision among the internal and external stakeholders.

#### **Commendation 3**

**AUQA commends the University of Canberra for its ten-year vision that recommit the University to serving its community.**

#### **3.2.2 Strategic Planning 2008–2012**

To achieve the refocused vision, the University developed a new Strategic Plan for 2008–2012 that lists five strategies supported by key initiatives called 'Steps'. The University has identified targets to be achieved by 2018 and aspires to achieve those in two stages, with the first stage targeting developments for the period 2008 to 2012 through 39 Steps. The University states that in the period covered by the Plan, it will strengthen the organisation's foundations, increase student numbers to 9000 full-time equivalents, consolidate its ranked position on educational indicators, improve its research performance and engage more effectively with its constituencies. It has plans to invest \$100 million during this period, in addition to its normal operating revenues, to implement the strategies. Through these steps, the University aspires to develop a vibrant campus life, draw students and researchers from around the world and become internationally recognised in its areas of strength. While the aspirations are commendable, AUQA cautions the University to watch the resource implications and reflect on how achievable the plans for resource mobilisation are, particularly in the present context of economic downturn. Further comments on resource issues are given in section 3.7.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan and the 39 Steps is to be supported by an Academic Plan and a Capability Plan. At the time of the Audit Visit, the Academic Plan had just been approved by the Academic Board and the Capability Plan was still in draft form. The Academic Plan consists of a subset of plans, including an Education Plan, a Research and Research Training Plan, an International Education Plan, and an Engagement Plan. The Capability Plan also consists of a subset of plans that includes the Capital Management Plan, Equity and Diversity Plan, Workforce and People Plan, Technology Plan, Library Plan, Information Management Plan, Risk Plan, and Water and Energy Plan. These are functional plans that describe the strategies and steps to be implemented by the University. The Panel was informed that the operational plans, that will describe detailed actions annually and how the University will resource them, will be developed for 2009 once the functional plans are finalised.

The Panel acknowledges that the new Strategic Plan has boosted the morale of the campus community. The Panel heard of many examples of the follow-through being done by senior management. However, the speed of change and extent of change need to be monitored to avoid the risk of change fatigue among staff. UC has identified more than one hundred key processes/activities to implement the 39 Steps and this large number of key processes raises the question of prioritisation. UC should prioritise and implement the new initiatives and projects in stages in order to ensure adequate momentum and continuity in implementation.

### 3.2.3 Annual Planning Cycle and Policy Framework

The annual planning cycle provides an indicative annual timeline of activities, including reporting in relation to strategic, operational and financial planning. At the time of the audit, not all timelines were being adhered to. The Panel was advised that the annual planning cycle will be fully implemented for the first time in 2009. Additionally, UC has developed a Policy Framework Manual that describes steps for developing new policy and procedures, consulting with stakeholders, obtaining endorsement and approval, introducing the new policy and procedures, and collecting feedback. New mechanisms for improved monitoring and reporting are being put in place. Although academic policies have built into them explicit expectations about review and updating this does not apply to all policies. The Panel urges the University to ensure that an evaluation component is built into all policy and planning frameworks in future.

The 2011 follow-up audit will be able to see the impact of these initiatives and the extent to which the need for consolidating policy development, especially in the academic area, has been addressed.

### 3.2.4 The Quality Portfolio

In preparation for the 2008 AUQA audit, the University wanted to integrate its self-review with the academic and administrative restructure occurring across the University. To assist the University to prepare for the audit, a fixed-term role of PVC (Quality) was created. The PVC (Quality) was responsible for developing and launching the University's implementation of a Quality Portfolio to be linked to the University's planning cycle to serve the purposes of both the audit portfolio required by AUQA and the quality assurance for UC.

The web-based Quality Portfolio underpins a planning model that connects the Strategic Plan to the other elements of the larger strategic planning framework of the University. The Quality Portfolio is intended progressively to document quality assurance measures that have been put in place related to core University processes. It is being built around a total of 107 core activities

and the individuals with operational responsibility for each activity are required to document 'Planning; Implementation; Evaluation; and Improvement' following a generic template.

The importance of quality assurance is generally understood among the staff. The conceptualisation of a broader framework to ensure quality and to document the policies and procedures which underpin it is a good initiative, but clearly it needs to be sustained. Considering that the Quality Portfolio is very much a work in progress which requires concerted monitoring, the Panel had some concerns about how the momentum to continue its development would be maintained following the 2008 audit and the completion of the PVC (Quality) role and with responsibility devolved to the faculties and administrative units.

## **Recommendation 2**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra strengthen the oversight mechanisms for quality management to enable attention to quality at this critical time of systems and governance and strategy change.**

### **3.3 Corporate Governance**

#### **3.3.1 The University Council**

The University is governed by a Council of 15 members, nine external to the University and six internal. Eight of the external members are appointed by the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), taking into consideration the advice of the University so as to bring a range of perspectives, knowledge, skills and expertise to the Council. The Council is chaired by the Chancellor, who is appointed by Council from outside or within Council. Two of the internal members serve ex officio: the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of Academic Board; others are elected by students and staff. The Council exercises its governance responsibilities through a number of subcommittees and advisory committees. Key committees, such as Audit and Risk Management Committee and Finance Committee, are normally chaired by external members of the Council, so that they may exercise expert and objective oversight of crucial aspects of the University's operations.

At this critical juncture in its development, UC needs a high level of attention and strong involvement by its Council, especially with respect to its financial and management performance. However, six of the nine external positions on the Council fell vacant at the end of June 2008 and were not filled by the government until mid-October. UC thus found itself in a very difficult situation with respect to pursuing urgent Council business, as some of its subcommittees could not meet. The vacancies also highlighted concerns about the adequacy of the Council's skills mix, particularly with respect to financial and legal expertise. Now that the Council is again up to full membership, it is hoped that the skills brought to it by its new members will enable it to function in a fully effective manner. Given the lengthy period when the Council vacancies were not filled, the Council should now consider the extent to which it may, through no fault of its own, have been out of compliance with National Governance Protocols and should ensure that it attends to any governance issues that might have arisen.

The Panel was able to meet only the Chair and two continuing external members of Council, since at the time of the Audit Visit, the new members had only just been appointed. The Panel was reassured that the Chair of the Council planned a briefing to make them aware of their roles and responsibilities and to inform them about the University's activities and key priorities.

The Panel heard that the previous Council was unaware of the seriousness of the University's financial difficulties. The Council's inability to recognise the extent of these financial problems was partly attributable to inaccurate and inadequate information provided to it. Poorly chosen benchmarking partners also contributed to an overly-optimistic picture of the University's performance against its KPIs. To avoid such lapses in the future, the University should ensure, as a matter of priority, that the information provided to the Council and to the senior management on the performance of the University is accurate, comprehensive and at the appropriate level of detail to allow the Council and the senior management to make informed decisions on the future of the University. The University has noted the gravity of this situation and is introducing a number of changes to its reporting mechanisms, including the selection of more appropriate institutions against which to benchmark.

#### **Affirmation 1**

**AUQA affirms the steps being taken by the University of Canberra to enhance institutional performance reporting to the University Council and to the senior management to support informed decision-making in the discharge of their responsibilities.**

Two important areas which need to be on the new Council's agenda are risk management and delegations policy. As part of the restructure, the University has developed a draft Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Plan. A Risk Register is also under development and new internal audit arrangements have been put into place. An Audit Recommendation Register keeps track of recommendations of the internal audit processes; at the time of the Audit Visit most of these still required action. The Panel was advised that, to ensure the effective implementation of audit recommendations, the Audit Recommendation Register will be reviewed and updated by the Vice-Chancellor's Group each month. The Council should monitor the Risk Management Plan and its implementation closely. For observations on the delegations policy see section 3.3.3.

#### 3.3.2 The Vice-Chancellor's Group

As part of the restructure, the University has established several new advisory structures and restructured some existing committees of which the key one is the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG). The VCG was called the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee prior to May 2007 and since restructure this committee meets every week. The VCG, which is composed of the VC, the PVCs, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chair of the Academic Board, the Secretary of Audit & Governance, and a representative dean, is playing a strong role in assisting the VC to roll out the new Strategic Plan and associated organisational changes. However, the Panel found widespread confusion among University staff about the distinction between advisory and line management functions of this and other informal and formal committees. The University should clarify the extent of their authority with respect to governance and management actions.

#### 3.3.3 Faculty Restructure

As part of its academic restructure, the University has established faculties, replacing the former divisional structure, and created a new suite of deanships to head the new faculties. The faculties are still being finalised; at the time of the Audit Visit the amalgamation of two of the initial faculties was in progress and a new dean-elect had just been named.

The Panel noted the commitment of the Vice-Chancellor to devolution of authority to the faculties and heard positive comments about what was widely seen to be an empowering move. The exact nature and limits of such devolution were not yet clearly understood nor seen in the

context of formal delegations from and to those affected and further work is needed to ensure that the extent of such devolution and the systems supporting it are clear and transparent. UC should pay close attention to establishing procedures that will enable it to check that the faculties are exercising the delegation effectively and within the confines of university policies.

### **3.4 Academic Governance**

Academic governance at the University of Canberra is a shared responsibility that involves various committees, positions and structures such as the faculty boards, heads of discipline and course reviews, with the Academic Board exercising the overall academic oversight.

#### **3.4.1 Academic Board**

UC has reviewed the role, membership and terms of reference of the Academic Board, as recommended in Cycle 1 (Recommendation 2). Further academic review in 2007 has brought more changes to academic governance. As a result of this review, a new Service Committee has been established as a subcommittee of Academic Board to provide academic coordination of services supporting teaching and research. This should go some way to responding to recommendations from the Cycle 1 audit concerning these services. In addition, a new International Education Committee has been created; its role is discussed in section 4.2.1. Responsibility for course approvals has been returned to the Board and its role in monitoring academic quality has been affirmed. The Panel felt that the new Academic Board is moving in the right direction, although it needs to establish its priorities and to further clarify and tighten its approach to policy development and quality monitoring. The need to ensure clarity about the nature and extent of delegations to governance bodies is also relevant here, as a number of staff to whom the Panel spoke believed the Board's subcommittees hold management responsibilities.

#### **3.4.2 Faculty Boards**

Faculty boards and faculty assessment boards have been established to replace the former divisional arrangements. The faculty boards were only beginning to function at the time of the Audit Visit and the Panel formed the impression that their development was somewhat uncoordinated. There was significant variation in the ways in which faculties were defining the roles and structures of their faculty boards, and the Panel was concerned that there did not appear to be a clear and shared understanding of the core responsibilities which all faculty boards are expected to discharge. The extent to which faculty boards exercise operational management as distinct from governance functions varied across faculties and their roles and delegated authority require greater clarification (Recommendation 3 in section 3.5).

#### **3.4.3 Heads of Discipline**

Before the restructure, some schools had a significant role for the head of discipline, although it was inconsistent across the schools. In the new structure, the role of heads of discipline has become unclear. The University has recognised the need to strengthen this role as a level of academic decision-making between the course and the faculty. The roles and responsibilities of the heads of discipline should be formalised as soon as possible. Professional development for heads of discipline to support them in playing the new roles effectively also needs attention.

#### **3.4.4 Course Renewal**

To ensure that its course profile is consonant with its new vision (Strategic Plan 2008–12 p3) and that its courses are relevant and viable, UC has taken a number of steps to renew its policies and

procedures with respect to course development, teaching and quality assurance. These include the introduction of new review and approval mechanisms, as well as strengthened faculty-level monitoring and provision for stakeholder feedback.

#### 3.4.4.1 Course Group Reviews

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report suggested the use of course advisory committees to ensure external input into the monitoring of all courses. In response to this recommendation, in 2005, the University implemented a new external course group review process, as the major vehicle for curriculum renewal. After further refinements to the process, the University proposes to extend the reviews to faculties and support services. The reviews will focus on strategic directions, leadership, management, quality and outcomes and operate on a five-year cycle. The Panel was advised that the University support service reviews will begin in 2009 and that the faculty reviews will begin in 2010. If fully implemented, this will go some way to addressing the intent of the Cycle 1 recommendation.

#### 3.4.4.2 Course Approval

The newly appointed associate deans of education in each faculty are to play a crucial role in implementing the course renewal processes. The newly developed two-stage system for course approvals has the potential to improve the processes greatly. It clarifies the different roles and responsibilities and introduces an integrated assessment of the strategic, business and academic merits of the proposal by a Gateway Group consisting of the Chief Operating Officer and the PVC (Education).

### **Commendation 4**

**AUQA commends the steps taken by the University of Canberra to renew its academic profile and strengthen the development and provision of its courses including the establishment of the new role of the associate deans of education.**

There is at present no provision for the periodic reaccreditation of courses, but the course group review process may partially address the need to ensure that courses remain up-to-date and attractive to students. The University should monitor this to ensure that the process proves adequate to the task, and at the same time consider introducing a formal reaccreditation requirement, in line with sector good practice. The Panel's observation about the place of professional accreditation in the University is given in section 3.8.

#### 3.4.4.3 Unit Outlines

As one of the quality assurance measures in teaching and learning, UC has introduced 'unit outlines' which need to be approved by heads of school. Unit outlines describe what is expected of students in a unit with respect to class attendance, reading, study and assessment. UC sees this as a contract with students. A well-received feature of the unit outlines introduced in Semester 1, 2008, is a new field titled 'Student Feedback'. This field informs students of the changes that have been made to the unit on the basis of previous student feedback.

#### 3.4.4.4 External Input

The University of Canberra has fostered good relationships with its region. The external stakeholders who met the Panel were positive about their interaction with the University.

The course advisory committees, established as a follow-up of a Cycle 1 recommendation, have facilitated external input into course development. However, the establishment of such committees, or of other mechanisms for gaining input from external stakeholders, was quite

uneven across the institution, with little or no formal provision in a number of areas. The external stakeholders the Panel interviewed in this regard had largely been involved in providing ad hoc program development advice rather than as members of formally constituted course advisory committees. They were positive about the opportunities they had had for input, but would welcome more formal structures.

External stakeholders also spoke highly of the students they receive for placements and projects. However, the Panel heard that recent changes to intake numbers which affected placement spaces were not communicated to the external stakeholders in a timely fashion and had caused significant problems. Here too, more formalised consultative structures would be of assistance.

#### 3.4.4.5 Student Feedback

The University conducts or participates in a number of surveys to collect and analyse student feedback. In moving forward with its strategic planning, the University recognises that it needs systematic evaluation and that student evaluations do not necessarily lead to systematic and significant action to improve teaching. The Final Report of the Review of Courses and Disciplines (2008) commented on this, and as a result the University has developed a pattern of 'action loops' to ensure appropriate actions are undertaken by relevant parties. To facilitate implementation of the new approach to student feedback, an Evaluation Reference Group has been established, chaired by the PVC (Education). The Planning and Statistics unit will need to play a key role in facilitating effective use of student feedback. See also comments in section 4.3.4 and Recommendation 7.

### 3.5 Overall Observations on Academic Governance

The major groups that share academic governance with the Academic Board such as the Board's subcommittees, faculty boards and heads of discipline lack clarity in their roles and responsibilities. AUQA acknowledges that this is largely due to the current changes and they will settle down in time. However, at present, this is resulting in significant variation in implementation of policies and procedures. The new Academic Board is still not well bedded down and its understanding of its role in monitoring UC's academic standards is still evolving. The Academic Board should consolidate its developments quickly and give attention to developing a set of priority matters for its attention, relating to both strategic planning directions and to areas of known policy or performance weaknesses which carry high risk.

The governance structures are perhaps not yet robust enough for the level of devolved responsibility they carry, and as a result, the University is relying more on individuals than on systems to carry forward its change agenda and core business. While this is understandable in the current context, it is neither desirable nor sustainable in the medium to long term.

#### **Recommendation 3**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra clarify academic governance operating procedures, including the new Council subcommittees, Academic Board priorities, and faculty boards' roles and responsibilities to ensure strong and consistent implementation.**

### 3.6 Administration and Management

#### 3.6.1 Review of Administrative Services and Business Processes

In 2007, the University initiated a review of its administration to remove duplication of administrative provisions and to reform systems and processes. The University hoped to use the subsequent savings for academic purposes and strategic renewal. Following the appointment of the new Chief Operating Officer in December 2007, the review and restructure resulted in assigning single service portfolios to the appropriate senior manager.

Duplication of administrative provisions between the central administrative division and the academic divisions was found to add to the University's recurring deficit. To address this cost issue, the University initiated a review to simplify its identified processes. Before the review, the ratio of administrative to academic staff was high by sector standards. There were also complaints that the processes for some day to day tasks were cumbersome. The review has led to a progressive re-centralisation and reform of systems and processes and downsizing of the administrative workforce.

Outsourcing is being used by UC as one of the strategies for process simplification and cost reduction. The University has outsourced student accommodation and is considering outsourcing some aspects of its IT operations to achieve further efficiencies. In the light of the concerns expressed over the outsourcing of student accommodation, the Panel encourages the University to undertake a robust cost/benefit analysis of its outsourcing proposals.

#### 3.6.2 Workforce Planning

The University acknowledges that changes in the organisational and governance structures of UC have been accompanied by considerable change and turnover amongst the senior staff. A majority of key posts are occupied by staff who are either new to the position or operating in an acting capacity. This raises issues of fragility of staff capability and loss of corporate memory. UC is aware of the need to address the loss of corporate memory and turnover of key staff by recruiting experienced and qualified senior staff with the appropriate executive management and technical skills.

The Panel noted that staff capability and skills profile might become an issue at all levels of the University workforce. The University needs a skilled workforce capable of carrying forward its new strategic directions. The policies and procedures for the recruitment, induction, review and support of staff as well as lines of responsibilities for these actions need to be established clearly. UC is aware of these needs but more work has to be done.

#### **Affirmation 2**

**(urgent) AUQA affirms the University of Canberra's intention to develop its capability plan, in particular the development of workload and workforce planning, policies and principles.**

#### 3.6.3 Performance Management and Development

Line management arrangements and position role statements appeared to be inconsistently implemented across the University. Some staff were not sure about the lines of reporting and this had an impact on performance management and development processes. The current professional development processes are very patchy. UC should clarify the policies and practices

related to performance management, performance development and promotions to embed the culture of follow-through and accountability. Although promotions policy issues seem to have been addressed, staff understanding seems to be mixed and workload issues still need attention. The performance development program was undergoing an internal review at the time of the audit. The University should give priority to ensuring consistency in implementing the program across all faculties and units.

### **Affirmation 3**

**(urgent) AUQA affirms the initiatives of the University of Canberra to implement a systematic performance development and management system across academic and professional staff to align faculty and unit performance with the Strategic Plan and corporate KPIs.**

### **3.7 Campus Revitalisation and Resource Mobilisation**

The University has estimated that its 39 Step Strategy will cost about \$100m to fully implement. The \$100m is proposed to be raised through increased student fee revenue, successful grant applications, income generated by the foundation programs and the proceeds of campus development. Development of the campus is seen as the primary source of these funds. This development is also expected to improve UC's integration with the ACT and region community and the University is engaged in a process of master planning for the campus.

The University proposes to place the proceeds from new campus development projects in a trust and use only the income generated by the investments of the trust. The Panel was advised that the trust fund is not intended to subsidise the University's day-to-day operations but rather to grow capability. The senior management seemed to be confident that this campus development plan, which will take up to 20 years to complete, will provide sufficient funds for the University strategy over the period 2008–2012. While acknowledging the confidence and conviction the University has in the campus development plan, it is important to develop a contingency plan in the event of any shortfall in the \$100m planned investment. The University needs a plan to address the likelihood and consequences of resource shortfall on the strategic planning targets.

### **Recommendation 4**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a contingency plan to address the impact on strategic planning targets that could occur as a result of any shortfall in income from planned campus development.**

As a result of the restructure that is still continuing, the 2008 budget is largely patterned after the allocations of 2007 and the University has plans to improve the 2009 budget in stages. The Panel was advised that in the new model, faculties will be the entrepreneurial businesses units.

PhillipsKPA was engaged by the University in 2007 to undertake a high level diagnostic review of the financial performance of the University. The work undertaken assisted the University in setting its 2008 budget. The review identified a number of key findings and recommendations relating to revenue, expenditure, cash flow and other matters germane to the viability of the University. In the light of the University's need to generate funds for its 39 Step Strategy the Panel encourages the University to proceed as a matter of priority in following through with the review's recommendations.

**Affirmation 4**

**(urgent) AUQA affirms that the University of Canberra continue to follow through with actions arising from the recommendations of the PhillipsKPA report, in particular, and as a matter of priority the actions relating to business planning, asset strategic planning and cash flow modelling.**

As mentioned earlier in this Report, the University has as part of its restructure developed a draft Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Plan. A Risk Register is also under development. The Panel was advised that business continuity plans had not yet been prepared. The Panel had concerns that this would leave the University in a high risk position particularly in respect to the areas that rely on its key enterprise system applications associated with student management, finance and human resources.

**Recommendation 5**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra ensure that business continuity plans are developed for the University's critical activities, in particular those areas that rely heavily on enterprise system applications.**

**3.8 Academic Standards**

As agreed with the University, AUQA has focused on the approach the University has taken to its chosen theme of renewal. The strategies it has begun to put into place to support academic renewal in line with its new vision statement have the potential to contribute to ensuring that academic standards at UC are maintained and enhanced. Among its renewed structures, plans and policies, the Panel considered that the following features can provide a firm basis for academic quality. The 2011 audit will examine how well they are achieving this goal. (This Report has comments on some of these aspects in other sections.)

Work on academic policies and procedures has begun to ensure these are clear and well documented and comprehensive in their coverage, although some are still in progress and need more work. Processes for course development and approval have been refined with the establishment of a Gateway Group for curriculum approval and a systematic process for course group reviews, although this may not prove an adequate mechanism for periodic curriculum review to ensure courses remain up-to-date. There is some involvement of external stakeholders in program approval processes although it remains ad hoc in many faculties and needs a more formal structure.

Procedures to support thorough and robust monitoring of assessment and moderation are being developed. Monitoring of academic standards by the restructured Academic Board and the new faculty boards is evolving, although a fuller understanding of expectations and strategies for doing so still needs to be developed.

Professional accreditation is widely seen by staff as the key method of monitoring threshold standards in academic programs. While this form of external review of programs indeed serves a useful benchmarking function, other methods of reviewing course performance (such as a periodic reaccreditation requirement) are also needed to address the full range of course performance criteria the University needs to monitor.

Attention to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was not explicit in the course development processes. Staff, in general, are not aware of the need to consider AQF requirements. The Academic Board seems to assume that compliance checking by the associate

deans and the Academic Registrar would be sufficient. As part of its monitoring role, the Academic Board should engage more explicitly in ensuring that the course development is in alignment with AQF requirements.

Although there appear to be gaps in demonstrating explicitly its standard setting with attention to external reference points and comparator institutions, UC has provided evidence of its 'approach' to monitoring standards. Performance of the University in many of these areas needs improvement and the University aspires to make those improvements through the renewal project. Overall, the renewal of the University's approach to monitoring academic standards is encouraging, but implementation is still evolving.

### **3.9 Outcome Measures and Benchmarking**

The University has identified student load, educational outcomes, research performance, and revenue generation as four KPIs. It has established performance targets for each of the KPIs to be achieved by 2013:

- to increase student load to 9000 equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) by 2013
- to be in the top third of universities nationally on standard educational measures
- to be in the top half of universities nationally in per capita average research measures
- to achieve \$100 million increase in base revenue to invest in teaching and research.

It has also agreed on nine key performance dimensions (KPDs) namely reputation, research, education, international, equity, environment, advancement, administration and finance. The University follows a 'dashboard indicator' approach to assessing performance in each of the KPDs. Some of the dashboard indicators show that performance is much lower than the aspirational targets and the University hopes to make improvements through the renewal project. Some of the dashboard indicators are simplistic and overly reliant on numbers. UC needs to give more attention to qualitative measures.

The University performs strongly in graduate employability but in other areas, the actual performance of the University does not match its aspirations. The Graduate Destination Survey data indicates that UC graduates do well in finding full-time employment and especially in 2006 the percentage of UC graduates in full-time employment was much higher than the cohort and sector percentages (Data item 5.4). However, overall student satisfaction data as derived from the Course Experience Questionnaire shows a downward trend. During 2004–06 the student satisfaction percentage has declined and the University is aware of the need to address this issue (Data item 5.5).

In 2007 the University participated in the first trial of the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement involving 25 Australasian universities. A summary of the overall results for UC indicate that the first year students of UC recorded a large positive difference on 'active learning'. For the other items of the survey the differences were either very small or non-existent.

The University has recently changed its selected peer group to one which generally achieves stronger scores. The University has nominated five other institutions against which to assess its performance: Flinders University, Murdoch University, James Cook University, University of Wollongong, and University of Tasmania. These five universities are of a similar size to the University of Canberra but are performing above the University in most areas and as such constitute stretch benchmarking. Together with the University of Canberra, these universities

are referred to at UC as the Group of Six. The stretch benchmarks will enable the Council to exercise a more meaningful oversight of the performance of UC.

The University needs to be aware that the value of the exercise might be diminished if staff feel that unfair comparisons are being made. It is important to communicate the rationale of stretch targets, benchmarking and aspirational goals and ensure staff support.

The Panel was provided with a long list of various benchmarking initiatives undertaken by the University. AUQA appreciates UC's enthusiasm to strengthen its self-monitoring capacity. Through these initiatives the University demonstrates good progress on attention to performance measures and outcomes but needs to ensure balance between quantitative and qualitative measures.

## 4 THEME: INTERNATIONALISATION

While the Audit Panel paid more attention to the 'approach' aspect of the approach-deployment-results-improvement (ADRI) cycle for the theme 'Renewal of the University', in relation to the theme 'Internationalisation', the Panel investigated all aspects of the University's international activities. The scope of this theme is:

- arrangements for the teaching and learning of international students in Australia
- arrangements for teaching and learning of transnational students offshore (including partner arrangements)
- internationalisation of the curriculum
- overall student experience including student mobility and staffing arrangements
- other international activities.

In addition, AUQA took into account relevant external reference points such as the ESOS Act and associated National Code, and the AVCC Code of Practice for Provision of Education to International Students.

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report noted that the University was then in transition from an 'opportunistic' to a more 'strategic and planned phase' in the evolution of its international education program. To assist UC with that transition the 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended that the University pay further attention to strategic priorities in international education. The 2003 AUQA Audit Report also acknowledged that the quality assurance arrangements for offshore teaching by the University were substantially sound.

By 2008, the University has recommitted to a general refocus on international activities through the Strategic and International Plans, the restructure of the international marketing and recruitment function, and the formation of a broad-based International Education Committee. This has generated among staff a positive commitment to expanding and strengthening the University's internationalisation activities. However, concerns related to strategic priorities expressed in the 2003 AUQA Audit Report continued to be live issues, especially in transnational education.

### 4.1 *Strategic Planning and KPIs*

Internationalisation has an important place in the new Strategic Plan (2008–12) which states that the University will 'engage effectively with the world around' it. To implement this strategy, the University has developed an International Plan as part of its overall Academic Plan. The International Plan lists key initiatives to be undertaken over the next five years.

The University's main emphasis in these initiatives has been a greater ambition in its international activities, using corporate KPIs. Both the growth of the onshore program and the continuation of the transnational program are seen to be important parts of this articulation.

However, the enrolment figures indicate that during the period 2004–07 the international students EFTSL has decreased by around 15%. During the same period the number of students in the transnational programs has also decreased by around 43% and its proportion in the total UC EFTSL has reduced from 11.9% to 8.0% (data items 5.6 and 5.7). Against this trend, the University has set ambitious load growth targets which have implications for the marketing staff and faculties and support services alike and would affect the budget if not achieved.

While the corporate KPIs set a 2012 EFTSL growth target that would return the University to 2005 achievement, the University could usefully consider unpacking that single number into onshore load and persons; transnational load and persons and most importantly, attach a consolidated dollar target. Given the importance of revenue generated from international activities to the UC budget overall, and to the faculties, a robust revenue generation model that takes into account the national higher education growth environment and factors affecting UC is needed.

Equally, the budget model for transnational programs did not seem to include all relevant costs. Setting a top down and bottom up budget model that informs realistic budget formation will be critical in managing the risk of overestimation of revenue. The University should review the ways in which other institutions set targets and estimate costs as it develops its own budget model.

#### **4.2 Management of Internationalisation**

As part of its reorganisation of administrative services, the University has significantly restructured the areas responsible for management of its international portfolio. The new management arrangements for overseeing international activities rely upon a distributed management model of shared responsibilities. While the educational issues related to international activities are the responsibility of the Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), recruitment of international students and the marketing of UC programs offshore is the responsibility of the Marketing and International unit. The Study Abroad Program is also managed by Marketing and International while student enrolment and student support is under Student and Academic Services. The Academic Registrar is the responsible officer for ESOS compliance. The Panel had concerns about whether this model will prove strong enough to ensure adequate management of related academic and reputational risk and urges that this be closely monitored.

##### **4.2.1 The International Education Committee**

The International Education Committee is an overdue governance development that allows stakeholders from across the University to discuss key issues and to formulate policy. It is a subcommittee of the Education Committee, itself a subcommittee of Academic Board. Through this Committee the University hopes to renew staff commitment and engagement in its International Plan and goals. The Panel acknowledges that the Committee has generated enhanced engagement and a positive attitude among staff towards strengthening and expanding the International Plan and goals.

#### **Affirmation 5**

#### **AUQA affirms the intent of the University of Canberra to ensure renewed staff commitment and engagement in its International Plan and goals.**

While the new Committee can play a key and revitalising role in the achievement of the International Plan it is located in the governance framework of the University and has a focus on education. Staff were not entirely clear about the boundaries of its terms of reference and its remit on management issues. This will be particularly important to clarify in relation to the role of the faculty deans in what is an avowed distributed model of leadership, and in particular in setting agreed and understood goals and quality assurance processes for the University's transnational program.

### **4.3 International Students Studying Onshore**

#### **4.3.1 Marketing and Recruitment**

The Strategic Plan (2008–12) includes two Steps that are relevant to the marketing and recruitment of international students. In implementing these Steps, as part of the 2007 administrative restructure, the University established the new Marketing and International unit and centralised international admissions and student support into the Student and Academic Services unit. AUQA acknowledges the University's efforts to revitalise the international marketing administrative arrangements.

There was some anxiety among staff about the potential overall impact of onshore student growth and in particular the impact on resourcing student support services to an appropriate level. (See also section 4.3.2 on implication for English language support.) It will be important for the University to develop planning and funding mechanisms, common in many Australian universities, which establish a connection between planned onshore growth and increased funding for student and academic support services such as the International Student Advisor function and English language support.

#### **4.3.2 English Language Proficiency**

The University is seeking to broaden access both to pathway students and to international students completing their secondary education in ACT schools. It has developed a number of post admission strategies and programs to identify student needs in relation to English language development, but it did not appear to the Panel that the resource implications of the support strategy had been adequately addressed.

There was evidence of staff concern about the implications of the onshore growth targets on quality in terms of student admissions and teaching and learning outcomes. Key to this was the formative debate about proposals to change the minimum specified IELTS entry requirement for postgraduate coursework from 6.5 overall to 6.0 overall with the specification of 6.0 in reading and writing. The proposal was not well understood and the PVC (Education) advised the Panel that the proposal lacked a clear rationale and has been sent back, seeking more information. There seemed to be considerable confusion about the locus of responsibility for such a change to the admissions policy, where the decision would be made and whether or not it would include HDR students.

The proposal did not seem to be informed by the current national debate about English language proficiency issues and the University did not appear to have plans to strengthen English language development in a systematic and scalable manner.

Further, the University uses an in-house test to place students in the ELICOS centre and the Panel found that this test is used for determining English language admissions requirements in three transnational programs. UC should quickly clarify the 2009–10 English language admissions requirements in the light of sector good practices, and communicate them both internally and to markets and partners. Most importantly, UC needs to ensure that both onshore and transnational admissions requirements and support services remain aligned. It should formally approve and communicate its English language admissions requirements policy and its implication to all relevant parties.

## Recommendation 6

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop an English language proficiency policy that takes into account access and admissions, and post admission support strategies for staff and students.**

### 4.3.3 Professional Development for Staff

For academic staff, professional development for various aspects of internationalisation is incorporated into general professional development programs. This needs to be scaled up and systematic offshore induction be provided for all transnational education (TNE) staff, and a more holistic approach taken to supporting staff on English language issues.

Professional staff in this area attend seminars and workshops to ensure their service provision is in line with regulations outlined in the ESOS Act. The Panel was informed that a professional development activity is identified for each staff member annually and provided for in the Student and Academic Services budget. There was little evidence of intercultural professional development that relates to specific cultures or markets important to UC.

### 4.3.4 Support for International Students

International students at UC come from over 80 countries. There are dedicated services for international students to ensure a smooth transition to the University and support during their studies. The University has worked through an external review of ESOS compliance. Following a further internal audit report, the University has clarified roles, responsibilities and put in place relevant policies and procedures to ensure that support services are provided in line with the ESOS Act.

The referral services of the Academic Skills Program are highly regarded and valued by students and staff alike but again the University will need to monitor the adequacy of the provision against increasing student and staff needs.

UC provides residential facilities and has a strong campus culture, both positive attractors for international students. However, the Panel found that a number of international students commented on the drinking culture of the student residences and this was raised with the Dean of Students. The University needs to put in place orientation and communication strategies to address intercultural issues in the halls of residence.

National comparisons with respect to the management of international activities derived from the annual reports produced by the Australian Universities International Directors Forum indicate that at UC, while costs of recruiting international students are well below sector averages, marketing and services staff numbers are above national averages. UC believes that this in part reflects the particular structure of the new integrated Marketing and International unit.

The University collects annual feedback on service provision and the 2006 survey indicated that international students perceived the administrative services, information provision and staff service as effective; there was also a small increase in satisfaction levels from the 2005 survey. The Panel was informed of UC's intentions to use a new survey instrument produced by an independent research company that will allow UC to benchmark 'satisfaction with services' across many participating institutions.

The Panel was advised that in order to identify international students who may benefit from assistance but do not actively seek it, new procedures are being developed. Use of the services continues to increase with the 2006 First Year Experience Survey indicating that 9.6% of respondents accessed the services provided in comparison to 3.3% in 2003.

Most feedback from international students comes from general surveys, and comparisons are not made across teaching modes and cohorts. While there is evidence of unit and course evaluation by all students, a systematic framework for student experience evaluation across modes and cohorts should be developed. This is applicable to transnational students as well. (For observations on support for transnational students see section 4.5.11.)

#### **Recommendation 7**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a holistic evaluation framework and cycle within which domestic, onshore international and transnational student experience is regularly evaluated, analysed, compared and improved upon.**

#### 4.3.5 Articulation Arrangements

The Panel noted that the senior management of the University identified articulation agreements and credit transfer arrangements as an important part of the University's international recruitment strategy. The initial articulation arrangements have been ad hoc, and currently the Marketing and International unit of the University is responsible for monitoring all articulation arrangements. As part of the 2007 review of administration, the role of the Articulation and International Partnerships Coordinator was created to centrally and systematically promote, manage and review articulation programs and credit transfer arrangements with overseas education institutions.

Although it is a growing source of international recruitment, the impact of the international articulation programs over recent years has been moderate and operational plans were not developed for this area. Noting the increasing importance of articulation for longer term relationships with offshore partners (Renmin University in particular), an operational plan for 2008 has been developed.

#### **4.4 Internationalisation of the Curriculum and Student Mobility**

The University's approach to internationalisation is characterised by a focus on staff and student cultural diversity with a valuing of language learning. There was evidence of staff enthusiasm for revitalisation of internationalisation of the curriculum although this appeared to be patchy, with inconsistent levels of priority across discipline areas.

Strengthening internationalisation of the curriculum is a priority for the newly established International Education Committee and there are plans to expand student mobility and staff exchange opportunities to add momentum to internationalisation of the curriculum. Student mobility has been strengthened with a dedicated officer in the Marketing and International unit.

#### **Affirmation 6**

**AUQA affirms the University of Canberra's plans to implement a consistent approach to internationalisation of the curriculum as appropriate to the different disciplines and programs, incorporating student mobility and exchange opportunities.**

## **4.5 Transnational Programs**

### **4.5.1 Transnational Education Strategy**

The University provides transnational programs through a range of different teaching models including bilingual teaching. In general, the various models rely on UC staff flying in to teach the majority of subjects building on local tutorial support. Key to quality assurance in this model is the support for local teachers provided by the UC teaching staff at the course and school level, and moderation of assessment.

The 2003 AUQA Audit Report recommended that UC consider strategic directions for offshore initiatives. In 2005, when the University submitted to AUQA its Progress Report on Cycle 1 recommendations, a moratorium on new offshore arrangements had been put in place until policy and procedures for offshore initiatives were reviewed. The review of UC's transnational programs (Clive Vernon Report 2007) that provided assessments of the UC transnational partnerships also urged the University to reconsider its TNE strategy and objectives. While the moratorium on developing TNE programs has been lifted following the Vice-Chancellor's recent visits to TNE partners, the University's goals and priorities in its overall TNE strategy need further clarification and communication to its internal community. As well, the University should give specific consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current TNE partnerships as recommended by the Vernon Report. This is particularly important in relation to the new faculty deans.

General quality assurance measures for TNE programs appear to be in place at the course level in terms of moderation, grade review and course review reports. However, it is not clear how and where the resulting information is used to inform a University-level understanding of quality and risks in TNE programs and drive improvements to policies and procedures governing all TNE courses and partners.

With a new faculty structure in place and a significant number of new deans and a devolved management model that positions the faculties as key operational units, the University needs to act quickly to clarify its TNE aspirations and provide the faculties with clear quality assurance mechanisms (Recommendation 8 in section 4.5.9).

A number of staff currently engaged in TNE programs expressed concern about the sustainability of a workload model which combines offshore teaching with onshore teaching and greater research expectations.

### **4.5.2 Transnational Education Partnerships Visited by the Panel**

Considering the variation in the models of the partnerships and also aspects such as materiality and risk, the Panel selected the following five programs for further investigation:

- Bachelor of Business Administration, Asiainstitut of Management, Singapore
- MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages & Foreign Language Teaching, University of Education, Vietnam
- Master of Marketing Communication, Informatics Holdings, Hong Kong, SAR
- Master of Business Administration, Eastern China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, People's Republic of China
- Master of Education, Harbin Normal University, Harbin, People's Republic of China.

A delegation of the Panel consisting of the Audit Director and a Panel member visited the programs in Singapore and Vietnam. A delegation of the Panel consisting of the Audit Director and the Panel Chair visited the programs in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China.

#### 4.5.3 Bachelor of Business Administration, Asaiinstitut of Management, Singapore

Considerable changes in UC personnel have been a feature of this program over recent years, with partner staff experiencing changes at almost every level of contacts.

Staff and student orientation are happening but there are no systematic plans or programs to guide it. Student unit evaluation is done only for the Asaiinstitut of Management (AM) appointed local tutors and not for UC staff. UC does not conduct periodic whole-of-course evaluation of the student experience to inform planning and improvements.

Nonetheless, academic quality appears to be very sound. The key factors underpinning quality and standards seem to be the small scale of the course, long-serving local staff, the commitment and direct involvement of the CEO in every aspect of the course, and the coherence and quality of the student body, who are all local polytechnic diploma students.

UC does not have any direct engagement with program alumni and AM has set up an online community to support graduate employment but this does not seem to be connected to any UC activity. UC relies on AM for marketing, branding and profiling of the program, and for establishing relationships with graduates and employers.

Students raised issues around UC online resources and the UC portal in terms of access and value. AM documents indicate that it has plans to develop an extended campus of UC in Singapore but at the Audit Visit, it seemed that neither the University nor the local partner had the capability to underwrite expansion plans.

#### 4.5.4 MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages & Foreign Language Teaching, University of Education, Vietnam

Academic quality, moderation, role of the co-teachers in marking, grade review and handling of minor plagiarism cases are all in place at the unit and course level with effective control and management from UC.

The facilities and resources of the University of Education (UE) are standard for a developing country tertiary education environment and there is strong reliance on the Departmental reading room for book resources and on the UC online resources. There were some questions as to whether the use of technology in this course was primarily about developing proficiency with just the technology or about the pedagogical aspects of using technology in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

The pass rates have been benchmarked against comparable course cohorts at the Bruce Campus and in China and UE has a higher failure rate. The course review report attributes this to the UC English language test being an insufficient basis of admission and proposes the introduction of an official test score of IELTS or TOEFL which may be more objective, reliable and valid. There is the broader consideration of whether the setting should be the current 6.5 overall IELTS score, or lowered to 6.0 overall score as proposed for the UC postgraduate minimum English requirements, being debated now for 2009 implementation. As the intake is now widened so not all students will have an undergraduate degree in English, UC should consider the implications for admissions requirements, academic performance, and curriculum.

Unit evaluation is routinely and uniformly undertaken, and UC staff often summarise unit feedback and report it to the class. Periodic whole-of-course evaluation of the student experience needs attention and alumni engagement has to be strengthened.

#### 4.5.5 Master of Marketing Communication, Informatics Holdings, Hong Kong, SAR

The program is currently in teach-out mode following the decision not to renew the contract two years ago. A UC review report from 2006 presents a nuanced view of why the contract was terminated. Problems included poor definition of responsibilities in the initial contract, lack of rigour in course standards and financial problems. The Vernon Report affirms the decision to terminate the partnership. The agreement related to the teach-out and the respective roles and responsibilities of Informatics Holdings (IH) and UC in that process were recorded only in emails and patchy discussion notes, and the Panel considered that aspects of the arrangements appeared problematic. The IH staff who are currently in charge of the program, are all quite new, either to their position or to the organisation. They were not able to provide clear information about the exit strategy apart from reporting that students understood the options available to them and accepted the teach-out provisions. The University needs to pay close attention to the end of teach-out in 2009.

#### 4.5.6 Master of Business Administration, Eastern China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

This is a long-standing partnership with the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) extending to 2012. The MoA is clear and comprehensive, and requires that the standards for MBA students at ECUST be the same as at UC's Bruce Campus. It meets the regulatory requirements of the Chinese Government.

The program is jointly taught by the Eastern China University of Science and Technology (ECUST) and UC staff with the co-teachers of ECUST providing a high level of tutorial and language support. The course is taught in both Chinese and English, with students streamed into two categories. Those who meet the UC English proficiency requirements at admission are considered to be in the English stream and get an unqualified testamur. Students who do not achieve IELTS 6.5 (reportedly as many as 90% of each intake) are considered to be in the bilingual stream and receive an annotated testamur saying they have studied in Chinese and in English. In fact, all the students follow the same bilingual program, as the ECUST units are taught and assessed in Chinese and co-teacher assistance in Chinese is provided in the UC units.

The Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) has audited the program twice previously and approved it. However, under a newly-adopted policy, the MoE objected to the annotation of the testamurs and required that such annotation cease, so that all students in joint programs receive the same (un-annotated) testamur. Following that, the University was considering the move towards teaching in English only. However, during the main Audit Visit the Panel was informed that this issue has been resolved and that the University will continue to annotate the testamurs. The Panel was not given evidence of this apparent change of the MoE position, and urges the University to clarify the situation and monitor it closely.

The program appears to be very well run, with an energetic and experienced joint program director at ECUST providing continuity and responsible management. Both students and teaching staff spoke positively about the partnership, several indicating a desire for closer collaboration with staff and students in Canberra. Policies on plagiarism, assessment and moderation are well in place.

There was evidence that the program outcomes at ECUST would benefit from intercampus benchmarking. Moderators' reports and sample results sheets indicated that the ECUST results cluster at the top end of the scale, with no failures and few ordinary passes. It would help ECUST staff to know output as well as input reference points from the Bruce Campus.

#### 4.5.7 Master of Education, Harbin Normal University, Harbin, People's Republic of China

This is one of the strong partnerships of UC, offered in a bilingual mode similar to the program with ECUST. The agreement has recently been reviewed and it is in line with the University policy on TNE programs; it makes provision for staff development for co-teachers and includes details of ESOS obligations and detailed statement of responsibilities. It also provides for annual review of operations. The program has the approval of the Chinese MoE which has apparently not raised any concerns over the use of annotated testamurs for graduates who have not qualified for the English language stream. Students, alumni and teachers support the annotation of the testamur regarding the language of instruction.

Learning outcomes, assessment and performance standards are equivalent to the program as delivered at UC. The co-teachers share much of the assessment workload and they get support from the UC staff in marking assignments and exam papers. Moderation seems to be followed, but student results are heavily skewed to credits and distinctions, with no failing results.

There is evidence of a real effort to solicit and act on student feedback. Access to online resources of UC, library facilities of the Harbin Normal University, internet connectivity, teaching spaces etc are good.

Provision for staff development for co-teachers appears to be a real strength but there are problems in finding and retaining local staff, and problems with low English proficiency among co-teachers.

#### 4.5.8 Overall Impressions on the Transnational education Programs Visited

Based on the five programs visited, the Panel formed the following views:

- The overall quality of most programs is sound.
- The University is well served by most of its partners and has had an effective model of using local co-teachers.
- Very different types of institutions have been selected as partners and this influences the support they are able to provide to students.
- There is some evidence of comparison of grades and academic standards with the relevant Bruce Campus cohorts, but more attention needs to be given to this.
- UC should address the language issues related to bilingual teaching, annotation of the testamur and English language requirements and make the outcomes and policies clear to all parties involved.
- Consistency in student assessment and effectiveness of the moderation process need more monitoring.
- A clear policy for the termination of TNE agreements and procedural guidelines covering teach-out arrangements needs to be developed as a matter of urgency.

#### 4.5.9 Management of Transnational Education

This seems to have been the responsibility of those directly involved in the programs with considerable variation across programs. The model to date has worked due to the committed

and diligent efforts of good academic staff rather than the result of planned and intentional systems and process requirements. To sustain academic and program quality, and to manage risk, the University should ensure a consistent approach to TNE management across all programs and locations.

There does not seem to have been a University-level debate about the decision to continue in TNE and under what parameters. The International Education Committee has an endorsement role for proposed TNE programs but it would appear that the faculty deans have the mandate to develop further TNE programs.

The return on investment analysis in the Vernon Report (2007) may be inadequate by current sector practices, which take into account more complex considerations of full costing and strategic contribution. The University should develop more robust budget models while clarifying its TNE strategy.

Overall, the University needs to give adequate attention to the increased quality and compliance requirements and concomitant reputational risks of its TNE activities, both within Australia and in overseas jurisdictions. Teach-out arrangements for TNE programs need particular attention. UC needs to establish clear and consistent policies and procedures for exit strategies to ensure that students are protected. The Panel was advised that this is happening for the new agreements and contracts. Attention is required to the contracts that have already been signed. The International Education Committee might have a significant role in addressing many of these issues.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra clarify its transnational education strategy and objectives, taking into account more robust budget models; considerations of academic and program sustainability; and quality and compliance requirements both Australian and in country jurisdictions.**

##### 4.5.10 English Language Proficiency

The Panel observed a considerable confusion over the use of annotated testamurs in the programs offered in the People's Republic of China and clarification of the policy on this is urgently needed (sections 4.5.6 and 4.5.7).

The use of the in-house UC English Placement Test to admit students to masters programs in Vietnam was found to be problematic with a greater failure rate offshore compared to the relevant Bruce Campus cohort. There was a lack of clarity about whether the use of the in-house test, which was not designed to be used for onshore admissions but only to place students in the ELICOS centre, would continue, or would be replaced by IELTS and, if so, whether the required score would be the same as that for onshore or not. This Report recommends that UC develop an English language policy and implement it consistently (Recommendation 6 in 4.3.2).

##### 4.5.11 Support for Transnational Education Students and Alumni

Support for TNE students is variable according to the local conditions and the type of partner. The University does not have a consistent way of analysing student feedback to improve the support services and the good practices the Panel noted are due to the enthusiasm of the UC program coordinator and the local partner rather than to any systematic University policy. (See also Recommendation 7 in section 4.3.4.)

In all cases the University is clearly lagging in alumni developments and this is in part being managed locally by partners. Given its strategic goal of building the UC brand locally, nationally and internationally, the University should develop strategies to build on the affiliation of its international alumni.

#### 4.5.12 Staff Induction and Professional Development

Staff induction and orientation for partner staff is done well at the local level by committed staff involved in TNE and there is an effective mentoring system in place. But there is no evidence of standard staff induction requirements. Arrangements to take care of effects of staff turnover were not evident. Lack of handover procedures was found to cause communication gaps in some programs. In some contracts, professional development of co-teachers is built in and those arrangements have been working well. The University should ensure that both staff induction and staff development receive consistent attention across all programs.

#### **Recommendation 9**

**AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a standard and required induction program for staff teaching offshore.**

#### **4.6 Academic Standards**

The University states that academic standards for education with respect to assessment are equivalent for domestic, international, and transnational students. The Panel investigated how the University achieves this.

In setting specific standards for international activities the University states that it is informed by a number of external guidelines and has developed policies in line with those guidelines. The external guidelines include:

- *AVCC Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities*
- ESOS Act
- University policies including the Admissions Policy
- explicit requirements in some TNE partnership arrangements.

Many aspects that contribute to enhancing academic standards are either undergoing changes or very new. There is a lack of consistency across programs and units in some cases. Policies and practices on moderation, staff development and monitoring the consistency of academic performance across multiple teaching sites are some such aspects. The University proposes to address this issue through its recently established International Education Committee, which will provide regular reports to Academic Board on academic outcomes related to international activities and draw on reports from faculty assessment boards. The International Education Committee and the Academic Board need to play a greater role in ensuring robustness and consistency in monitoring academic standards in international activities (Affirmation 7 in section 4.7).

#### **4.7 Outcome Measures**

The outcomes of international activities are to be monitored primarily by the International Education Committee.

The comparative performance of domestic and international students at UC and other Australian universities was examined in a report by Olsen and Sharma in 2006. The data show that, overall, domestic students at UC outperform international students (PF 3.1, p5).

An analysis of the progress rates (%) of international and domestic students show that UC's total progress rates have remained higher than both the cohort and sector throughout the entire time series 2002–06 (Data item 5.8). However, within the institution, the progress rates of overseas students has remained significantly lower than the domestic students and also significantly lower than both cohort and sector totals throughout the entire time series. Progress rates of onshore international students are also significantly lower than those of the domestic students. In other words, there are some concerns about the progress rates of UC international and transnational students both in comparison with sector averages and in comparison with the University's domestic cohort.

Regarding the academic performance of international and transnational students at the University level, there has been only limited systematic monitoring. The University hopes to strengthen attention to this aspect through the International Education Committee and the Planning and Statistics unit.

#### **Affirmation 7**

**AUQA affirms the intentions of the University of Canberra to enhance systematic monitoring of academic performance of international and transnational students at the University level.**

## 5 DATA

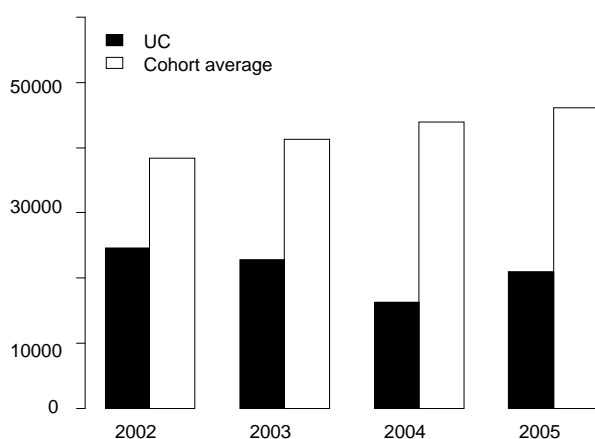
### Notes

The University of Canberra cohort as defined in their 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio consists of the: Flinders University, James Cook University, Murdoch University, University of Tasmania and the University of Wollongong.

The sector is defined in the UC 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio as consisting of the higher education Table A providers as listed in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* section 16-15.

National is defined in the UC 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio as consisting of the higher education Table A providers ('sector') plus the two private universities ie Bond University and the University of Notre Dame Australia.

### **Item 5.1: University of Canberra per capita research income compared with the cohort**



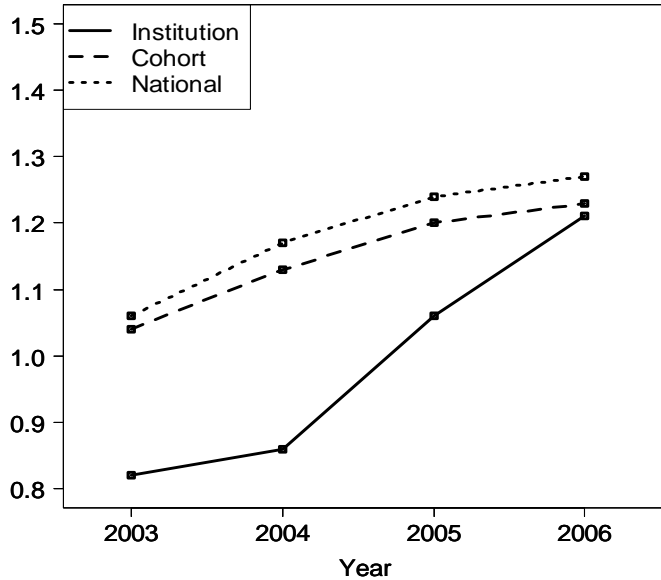
Source: UC 2008 Performance Portfolio, Figure 2.2.3b.

### **Item 5.2: HDR load and HDR completions (comps) per FTE**

|                   | 2002 |       | 2003 |       | 2004 |       | 2005 |       |
|-------------------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
|                   | load | comps | load | comps | load | comps | load | comps |
| UC                | 0.48 | 0.12  | 0.49 | 0.12  | 0.54 | 0.08  | 0.57 | 0.11  |
| Average of Cohort | 0.96 | 0.18  | 1    | 0.19  | 1.01 | 0.18  | 0.99 | 0.18  |

Source: UC 2008 Performance Portfolio, figures section 2.2.3c & d.

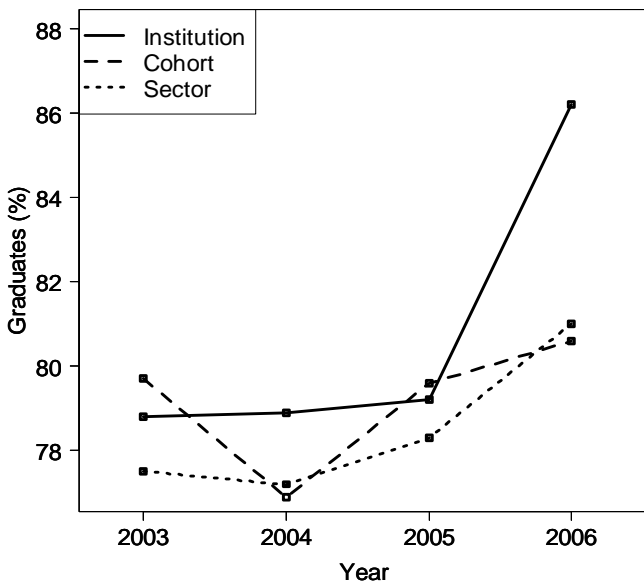
**Item 5.3: University of Canberra publications relative to academic staff numbers compared with cohort and national academic staff numbers 2003-06**



The institution's publications relative to academic staff numbers have remained below both the cohort and national throughout the entire time series 2003-06. However, the institution's trend increased rapidly after 2004 to near match the cohort result in 2006.

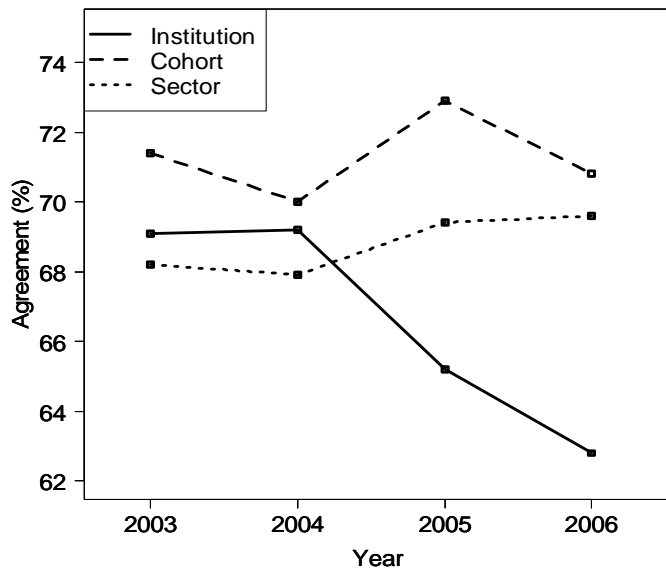
Source: Data taken from the research section of UC's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.4: University of Canberra graduates in full-time work (%) compared with sector and cohort 2003-06**



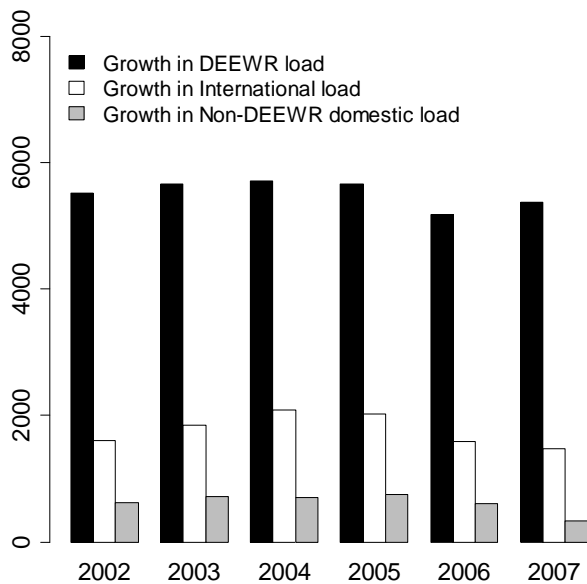
Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of UC's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.5: University of Canberra Overall Satisfaction percentage agreement compared with sector and cohort 2003–06**



Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of UC’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.6: University of Canberra EFTSL by category 2002–07**



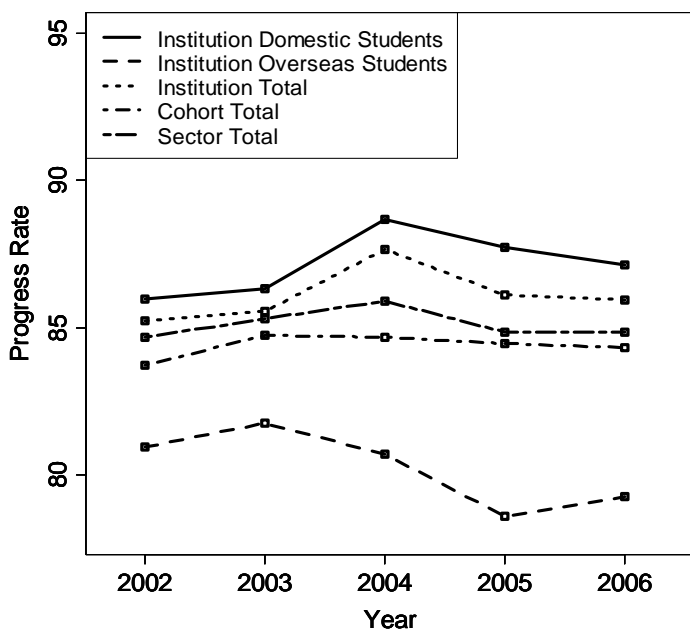
Source: UC 2008 Performance Portfolio, Table 2.1.2a.

**Item 5.7 University of Canberra EFTSL**

|                                   | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Growth in DEEWR load              | 5528 | 5662 | 5722 | 5673 | 5175 | 5376 |
| Growth in International load      | 1613 | 1844 | 2093 | 2023 | 1595 | 1469 |
| Growth in Non-DEEWR domestic load | 622  | 717  | 702  | 745  | 602  | 337  |

Source: UC 2008 Performance Portfolio, Table 2.1.2a.

**Item 5.8: University of Canberra progress rates for commencing bachelor students compared with the sector and cohort 2002–06**



The institution’s total progress rates have remained higher than both the cohort and sector throughout the entire time series 2002–06. Within the institution, the progress rates of overseas students has remained significantly lower than the domestic students and also significantly lower than both cohort and sector totals throughout the entire time series 2002–06.

Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of UC’s 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: The Audit Process

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

AUQA pre-selected the theme of 'Internationalisation' for the audit of the University of Canberra, taking into account: the presence of offshore programs (a known high risk area of university operations), the proportion of international students studying UC courses; and recommendations from the 2003 AUQA Audit Report.

The theme 'Renewal of the University' was suggested by UC and accepted by AUQA in view of its significance for the University's strategic planning and future directions.

AUQA also selected the Cycle 1 audit recommendations on research and research training for follow-up, as attention to research management was a significant issue in the 2003 AUQA Audit Report.

On 20 July 2008, UC presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, including 37 supporting materials. The Audit Panel met on 8 August 2008 to consider those materials.

The Audit Panel Chair and Audit Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to UC on 26 August. During that visit, the answers to questions and additional information requested by the Panel were discussed, as well as the Audit Visit program.

A visit to five educational partners of UC in the provision of offshore programs was conducted from 25 to 27 September and from 13 to 17 October 2008. A written report of these activities was circulated to the full Audit Panel prior to the main Audit Visit. The main Audit Visit to the University took place between 27 and 30 October 2008.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with around 200 people in the course of the audit, including the Vice-Chancellor, the Chancellor, external members of the University Council, senior management, academic and general staff, external stakeholders, undergraduate and postgraduate students (including international students), and offshore partners. Open sessions were available for any member of the University community to meet the Audit Panel and no one took advantage of this opportunity.

AUQA expresses its appreciation to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) and others at UC for their professional and friendly assistance and organisation throughout the audit process. AUQA also thanks UC for its ready production of additional information and for granting the Panel secure access to its intranet for the period of the audit. Engagement of the students and staff with the Panel during the Audit Visit was friendly, cordial, open, and expansive.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 30 October 2008, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. The Report

records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by UC, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Panel.

While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the University's activities within the scope of the audit, which is primarily on the approaches of the University in one of the two audit themes, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

In addition to the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes, external reference points referred to in the report include:

- the Australian Qualifications Framework
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cwlth) and subordinate legislation and regulations, including the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007*
- *AVCC Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities, 2005*
- 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio: University of Canberra
- Course Experience Questionnaire
- Graduate Destination Survey
- Association of Commonwealth Universities Benchmarking Program.

Quotations taken from the Portfolio are identified in the Report as (PF plus section and page reference).

The mission, objectives, values and vision of AUQA are shown in Appendix B, membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C and Appendix D defines abbreviations and technical terms used in this Report.

## APPENDIX B: AUQA's Mission, Objectives, Vision and Values

### Mission

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

### Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

## Vision

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

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

## Values

AUQA will be:

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

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

## **APPENDIX C: The Audit Panel**

Dr Anna Ciccarelli, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (International and Development), University of South Australia

Mr Graeme Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, Deakin University

Dr Anne Martin, Higher Education Consultant (Chair)

Mr Richard Lewis, Former Pro Vice-Chancellor, UK Open University, England

Dr Antony Stella, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Observer:

Dr Salim Al Rizvi, Planning and Development Expert, Oman Accreditation Council, Oman

## APPENDIX D: Abbreviations and Definitions

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

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ACT.....                      | Australian Capital Territory  |
| AM .....                      | Asiainstitut of Management, Singapore   |
| AQF .....                     | Australian Qualifications Framework   |
| AUQA .....                    | Australian Universities Quality Agency  |
| AVCC .....                    | Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (now Universities Australia)   |
| DEEWR.....                    | Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations   |
| ECUST.....                    | Eastern China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, People's Republic of China  |
| EFTSL.....                    | equivalent full-time student load   |
| ELICOS.....                   | English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students  |
| ESOS.....                     | Education Services for Overseas Students  |
| ESOS Act .....                | Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000   |
| FLT.....                      | Foreign Language Teaching   |
| FTE .....                     | full-time equivalent (staff measure)  |
| HDR.....                      | higher degree/s by research   |
| IELTS.....                    | International English Language Testing System   |
| IH .....                      | Informatics Holdings, Hong Kong, SAR  |
| KPDs.....                     | key performance dimensions  |
| KPIs .....                    | key performance indicators  |
| MCEETYA .....                 | Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs  |
| MoA .....                     | Memorandum of Agreement   |
| MoE.....                      | Ministry of Education   |
| National Code .....           | National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students   |
| National Governance Protocols | National Governance Protocols for Higher Education Providers are set out in Chapter 7 of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines ( <a href="http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/guidelines/cgs_guide.htm">http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/guidelines/cgs_guide.htm</a> ) |
| National Protocols .....      | National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes  |
| PF 2.2 p5 .....               | Performance Portfolio section and page reference  |
| Portfolio.....                | Performance Portfolio   |
| PVC.....                      | Pro Vice-Chancellor   |
| TESOL.....                    | teaching English to speakers of other languages   |
| TNE.....                      | transnational education   |
| TOEFL.....                    | Test of English as a Foreign Language   |

- UC .....University of Canberra
- UE .....University of Education, Vietnam
- VC .....Vice-Chancellor
- VCG .....Vice-Chancellor’s Group



