

AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITIES
QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
Charles Darwin University

October 2005

AUQA Audit Report Number 34

ISBN 1 877090 40 9

© 2005 Australian Universities Quality Agency

Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Ph 03 9664 1000
Fax 03 9639 7377

admin@auqa.edu.au

<http://www.auqa.edu.au>

The Australian Universities Quality Agency receives financial support from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT	1
Background	1
The Audit Process	1
CONCLUSIONS.....	3
Introduction to Findings.....	3
Commendations.....	5
Affirmations	6
Recommendations	6
1 ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE	8
1.1 The CDU Difference	8
1.2 Organisational Structure	9
1.3 CDU's External Image.....	10
1.4 Partnership with the NT Government	11
1.5 Quality Systems	11
1.5.1 Quality Policy	11
1.5.2 Self-Review	12
1.5.3 ISO9001:2000.....	12
1.6 Champions	12
1.7 Communications	13
2 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	15
2.1 Council and its Committees	15
2.1.1 Council Structure.....	15
2.1.2 Council Committees	15
2.2 Senior Management	16
2.2.1 Vice-Chancellor's Management Group.....	16
2.2.2 Academic Board	16
2.3 Academic Units.....	17
2.3.1 Faculties.....	17
2.3.2 Deans	17
2.3.3 Schools	17
2.3.4 Devolution.....	18
2.4 Planning	18
2.4.1 The Planning Process	18
2.4.2 Linking Planning with Quality Assurance.....	18
3 CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING.....	20
3.1 Objectives and Strategies	20
3.2 Course Approval	21
3.2.1 Accreditation	21
3.2.2 Structural Issues.....	22
3.3 Teaching and Learning Development Group.....	22
3.3.1 Staff Development.....	22
3.3.2 On-line Courses	23

3.4	Teaching and Learning Champions.....	23
3.5	Generic Skills	24
3.5.1	Common Unit Program.....	24
3.5.2	Graduate Attributes.....	25
3.6	VET.....	25
3.6.1	Integration.....	25
3.6.2	Articulation.....	26
3.7	Evaluations.....	26
3.8	Assessment.....	27
4	RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING.....	28
4.1	The Research Structure	28
4.1.1	Research Management.....	28
4.1.2	Research Income.....	29
4.1.3	Ethics	29
4.2	Research Priority Areas.....	29
4.3	Institute of Advanced Studies	30
4.4	Research Champions	31
4.5	Research Training	32
4.5.1	Supervision	32
4.5.2	Support.....	33
5	COMMUNITY AND ACCESS.....	34
5.1	The Community and Access Portfolio	34
5.2	Indigenous Initiatives	35
5.2.1	Structures	35
5.2.2	Internal Activities	36
5.2.3	External Activities	36
5.3	Community Engagement.....	37
5.4	Articulated Pathways	37
5.5	Regional and Remote Activities.....	38
6	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	39
6.1	The Business Development Portfolio.....	39
6.1.1	Understanding Business Development.....	39
6.1.2	External Relations.....	40
6.1.3	The Business Development Unit	40
6.2	International Students.....	40
7	CORPORATE SERVICES	42
7.1	Administration.....	42
7.2	Human Resources.....	43
7.3	Student Services	44
7.3.1	Enrolment	44
7.3.2	Academic Liaison Units	44
7.3.3	Other Services.....	44
7.4	Library and IT	44
7.4.1	Library	44
7.4.2	Information Technology and Management Services.....	45

7.5	Finance System	45
7.6	Communications	46
APPENDIX A: CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY		47
APPENDIX B: AUQA'S MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND VALUES.....		49
APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL		50
APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS		51

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

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

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

The Audit Process

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

CDU presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA a little late, over the period 5-8 April, along with 149 supporting items of documentation. The Audit Panel met on 22 April 2005 to consider these materials. It commented that the numbering of the supplementary documents was somewhat confusing, and that no glossary of CDU terms was provided. However, the Panel was very appreciative of having all the documents available on CD.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and Audit Director undertook a preparatory visit to CDU in Darwin on 16 May. During that visit, detailed consideration was given to the campuses and operations of CDU to be visited by members of the Panel. Of the almost 3000 higher education equivalent full-time student load in 2004, only 100 were at Alice Springs and 12 at Palmerston. Since AUQA's current remit is to audit institutions of higher education (not vocational education and training (VET)), the Audit Panel visited only the Casuarina campus, but there interviewed staff based at Palmerston and (via video link) staff and students at Alice Springs. At the time of the Audit, no higher education students were enrolled overseas, so the Panel made no overseas visits.

Subsequent to the preparatory visit, further materials were supplied by CDU as requested by the Panel. Again, these were rather late, but again were helpfully provided on CD.

The Audit Visit took place at the Casuarina campus of CDU in Darwin over 26 to 30 June. In all, the Audit Panel spoke with almost 230 people during the Audit Visit, including Council members, staff, students and members of the community, including distant links with people in other sites. Panel members also spent a short period visiting other parts of the campus, talking to people in their own work areas. Sessions were also available for any member of the CDU community to meet the Audit Panel and a number of people took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 30 June and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by CDU as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a

comprehensive understanding of CDU's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of findings together with lists of commendations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an unsuitable approach, a faulty deployment, or a lack of success in relation to a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. They indicate matters in need of attention, possibly with suggestions for action. Where such matters have already been identified by CDU, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA Audit Reports may have resource implications, and that this can pose difficulties for institutions. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise the recommendations, and recognises that it is CDU's responsibility to respond in a manner consistent with its local context.

The layout of the University's Performance Portfolio followed the newly-created structure of CDU, and this Audit Report largely reflects that structure also.

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. It should be noted that other favourable comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

In November 2003, Northern Territory University, Centralian College (Alice Springs) and the Northern Territory Rural College (Katherine) amalgamated to form Charles Darwin University (CDU). In January 2004, the Menzies School of Health Research (Darwin) joined CDU as a controlled entity of the University. The Performance Portfolio explicitly presents CDU as a new institution, with language suggesting that CDU is a 'greenfields university' only 18 months old at the time of the Audit Visit. In fact, systems from the constituent institutions have continued to guide CDU until new systems have superseded them. The extent to which CDU is a new or continuing entity is discussed in section 1.1. Regardless of where on this 'old/new spectrum' CDU is located, the creation of CDU was used as an opportunity to design many systems anew. An AUQA audit panel usually obtains the strategic plan from three or four years before the audit, and investigates the extent of achievement of the goals laid out therein. In the case of this audit of CDU, the only relevant plans are new, like the overall Strategic Directions (2004-2005, but still being approved in 2005) and the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan (2005-2006) (section 3.1). This Audit Report necessarily refers more to the Approach and Deployment segments of the ADRI cycle than to the Results and Improvement segments.

CDU shares with the University of Tasmania the characteristic of being the only Australian university in its state or territory, and it takes its consequent responsibilities seriously. One way in which this is being addressed is through a formal partnership between CDU and the Northern Territory Government. This Partnership, one of the very few such arrangements in Australia, has great potential, and many achievements are already being realised. A very positive aspect of the arrangement is that it emphasises partnership rather than seeing the government as buying services, and it incorporates forward planning. Staff secondment is taking place in both directions. The general attitude to CDU within the Northern Territory community is of pride, mixed with a feeling that the University could be more accessible. On the other hand, the community often has unrealistic expectations of CDU. The Report recommends increased attention to a communications strategy, both internally to assist staff with the changes from the former institutions to the new environment, and externally to provide a realistic view of the University's abilities and achievements.

The Quality Policy is featured as the main University policy, but it (like the other policies) is new and there is not yet a sense of an overall University-wide quality system. The policy commits CDU to external benchmarking and to a cycle of reviews, and work is beginning in these areas.

Schools identify academic staff members to be 'champions' for teaching and learning, research, community and access, and business development to advance that area. This is a creative and interesting concept, but it is not yet fully functional. CDU itself notes that "there is still some work to effectively embed Champions in their role" (PF p9) and the Panel supports this judgement.

The CDU Council was specifically designed on the model of a Board of Trustees to comply with the National Governance Protocols, and is moving towards full compliance. It has carried out induction and self-assessment, and pays close attention to risk management. Unlike many dual sector universities, CDU has an integrated Academic Board covering both the VET and the higher education components of the University. It deals primarily with strategic issues, and carries out its other work mainly through two subcommittees, namely the Teaching and Learning Panel and the Research Panel, which have strong representation by the management members of the Board. This Report contains recommendations about the Board's course accreditation.

There are three faculties containing 11 schools. Schools feature strongly in the Performance Portfolio, devolved activities are largely devolved to schools rather than faculties, and schools appear to have a good deal of autonomy. Each school covers higher education and VET and all the locations relevant to that discipline. This appears to be an effective model for integration, though heads of school feel under pressure from the range of commitments and requirements that this structure entails, and this Report recommends that CDU clarify the expectations of deans and heads of school.

In the teaching and learning area, CDU has set an ambitiously large number of 'priority improvements'. The Audit Panel found a general recognition of the need for more precision in the relation between strategies, actions and objectives in this area. CDU has recognised the need for greater attention to targeted staff development than was the case in NTU. It has a Teaching and Learning Development Group which has recently been strengthened with a professorial level appointment of Leader, Teaching and Learning Development. Early tasks will be staff development for teaching, use of student evaluations for evidence-based improvement, re-identification of graduate attributes and ensuring the necessary curriculum for those attributes. Attention is needed to assessment specifications in terms that assist CDU to make statements about the comparability of standards across all its courses.

The Common Units Program was introduced in 1998 to address the need for students to have core and background skills and knowledge. The program has been reviewed from time to time, and is a valuable contribution to the achievement of CDU's goals. This Report makes recommendations in relation to improving its implementation.

CDU is aiming for 'learner-centred' and 'resource-based approaches' to teaching and learning, and is rapidly putting units on-line, with staff required to attend workshops before offering on-line units. CDU identified problems with the course advisor system, and introduced faculty academic liaison units to address these, but further work is needed in this area.

CDU is paying attention to the articulation and 'embedding' of VET courses, and the Audit Panel saw some successful instances, both within schools and between schools. Staff and students need to be made more aware of the mechanisms for, possibilities of and benefits of articulation.

To achieve a critical mass for research, CDU has created an Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), modelled on, and having a relationship with, the IAS at the Australian National University. This Report makes recommendations intended to enhance the functioning of the IAS. CDU has also identified four research priority areas in consultation with its Northern Territory community and has appointed some high profile research leaders.

Higher degree student numbers are modest. As these increase, it will be important for CDU to strengthen its training for supervisors and support for higher degree students. Like many Northern Territory organisations, CDU has a relatively high staff turnover. This is particularly critical in the higher degree area where provision must be made for continuity of supervision. This report recommends that CDU minimise its use of short-term appointments, which appears to exacerbate the Northern Territory tendency for transience.

This Report commends CDU for its extensive University-wide attention to Indigenous issues, including the position of Dean, Indigenous Research and Education, cross-cultural awareness training, Indigenous Support Unit, Indigenous cadetships, outreach to remote areas, high school liaison program and the emerging Memorandum of Understanding with the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Recognising the need for the diversification of funding sources, CDU has specified business development as one of its five core business areas (along with research, teaching, community and administration). There is need for a better understanding of this throughout the University, and a more streamlined approach for staff trying to undertake business development opportunities. CDU's international work falls

under this area, but its plans are at an early stage. More work is needed here to achieve coherent and feasible plans and strategies. A new Director, International was to take office soon after the Audit Visit.

The Library and Information Technology and Management Services (ITMS) work effectively, both separately and together. Students appreciate the new Learning Precinct, which is a joint Library/ITMS facility. The Library will need to provide more resources in the identified research priority areas. This Report makes recommendation relating to improvements in administration, human resources and student services.

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. These are not prioritised by the Audit Panel. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

1.	AUQA commends CDU for establishing a high-level partnership with the NT Government for the mutual benefit of the Territory and the University.....	11
2.	AUQA commends CDU for the innovative concept of school-based ‘champions’ across its main identified areas of core business.	13
3.	AUQA commends CDU for the emerging co-ordinated attention to academic and resource considerations within the course accreditation process.....	21
4.	AUQA commends CDU for the introduction of Alternative Exit Awards.	22
5.	AUQA commends CDU’s commitment to learning and teaching as signalled by, inter alia, the senior appointment of a leader in this area.....	23
6.	AUQA commends CDU’s approach to identifying its research priority areas, and the subsequent targeted recruitment of senior staff to these areas to provide strong research leadership.	30
7.	AUQA commends CDU’s recognition of its vital role in Indigenous development and its commitment to valuing Indigenous people.	36
8.	AUQA commends CDU’s establishment of the Indigenous Support Unit, the Indigenous cadetships, and the cross-cultural awareness training program.	36
9.	AUQA commends CDU’s secondary school liaison programs.	37
10.	AUQA commends CDU staff commitment to community and personal development in remote areas.	38
11.	AUQA commends CDU’s identification of and commitment to the need for diversification of income sources.....	39
12.	AUQA commends CDU’s attention to the employment of high-quality staff and the good foundation this provides for development and growth.....	44
13.	AUQA commends the development of CDU’s Learning Precinct, which is gaining positive feedback from students.	45
14.	AUQA commends the collaboration and synergy between CDU’s Library and the Information Technology and Management Services.	45

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms CDU’s recognition that there is a need for a wider understanding of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan, the way it addresses institutional objectives for teaching and learning, and how strategies and actions are aligned to the objectives.....21

2. AUQA affirms CDU’s recognition of the need for the Teaching and Learning Development Group to have a greater focus on professional development for academic staff.....23

3. AUQA affirms CDU’s intent to restate graduate attributes and review the curriculum in terms of their achievement.25

4. AUQA affirms CDU’s work on VET/HE articulation and the need to ensure that staff and students are made aware of the mechanisms for, possibilities of and benefits of articulation between HE and VET courses.....26

5. AUQA affirms CDU’s intent to make greater use of student evaluations in achieving improvement.27

6. AUQA affirms CDU’s recognition of the need for explicit criteria for admission to the register of supervisors, and rules about removal therefrom.32

7. AUQA affirms CDU’s current move towards greater use of supervisory panels instead of sole supervisors for research higher degree students.33

8. AUQA affirms CDU’s intention to strengthen the service culture of the administrative services provided centrally and through academic units.....42

9. AUQA affirms CDU’s implementation of actions recommended in the People Development and Management Review, including induction and annual performance reviews.43

Recommendations

1. AUQA recommends that CDU reflect on the concept of ‘champions’, possibly reducing the number of positions, implementing a more formal appointment process, and ensuring that the incumbent has the ability, support and authority to carry out the required tasks.13

2. AUQA recommends that CDU develop its approach to communications, to ensure that decisions and information about changes are communicated to staff and that their views are heard by the leadership group.14

3. AUQA recommends that CDU consider the introduction of a Council Finance Committee distinct from a separate Audit Committee.....15

4. AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that recommendations relating to course accreditation and reaccreditation be made formally to Council; or alternatively that Council formally delegate specific responsibility.16

5. AUQA recommends that CDU clarify the expectations of deans and heads of school and ensure that performance is monitored through performance reviews.17

6. AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that the intended outcomes of the Common Unit Program are achieved and that it is catering for the different ability levels and knowledge of different students.25

7. AUQA recommends that, in order to achieve its objective of creating a centre of excellence for Indigenous knowledge, CDU reassess and redefine the role of the Dean, Indigenous Research and Education, make additional appropriate senior research appointments and devise a program for the development of Indigenous researchers, possibly including targeted funding, and including recognition and training of field workers where appropriate.....30
8. AUQA notes CDU's recognition of tensions between the faculties and the IAS and recommends that these tensions be addressed by senior management, before they become embedded.31
9. AUQA recommends that CDU implement mandatory training for the supervisors of research higher degree students.....32
10. AUQA recommends that CDU adopt a more strategic approach to community engagement, with a coherent plan for activities, but permitting flexible arrangements within it.35
11. AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that staff operating into remote areas are adequately supported, and that their activities are well co-ordinated.....38
12. AUQA recommends that CDU clarify the concepts of business development for staff, and provide suitable training, incentives and reward for their attempts to carry it out.....40
13. AUQA recommends that CDU improve its planning and focus in the area of international student recruitment, with some reference to its own identified 'near Asia' region.41
14. AUQA recommends that CDU review the use of short-term contracts, while recognising the need to balance its budget.43
15. AUQA recommends that CDU review the finance area, providing training as necessary, with a view to providing more effective support to the schools and faculties.46

1 ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

According to the Strategic Plan, published in 2005, CDU's goals for the short term (ie by the end of 2006) are to be:

1. *Recognised as the people's university in the Northern Territory – as a cultural and intellectual asset, a unified institution delivering quality VET and HED [higher education] programs*
2. *On the radar screen elsewhere in Australia as a place that the Commonwealth and companies are turning to for input into solutions relevant to operations in, services to and sustainable development of rural and remote communities*
3. *Causing overseas players to take notice, particularly those from centres of excellence in tropical or desert issues or the interplay between indigenous and western cultures*
4. *Confident of itself and its future.*

CDU's goals for the intermediate term (ie by the end of 2010) are to be:

1. *Recognised nationally as an institution that is changing and influencing the world around us*
2. *Providing the Northern Territory with skilled graduates from both VET and HE able to translate their learning into practice in cross cultural environments*
3. *Having an Indigenous vocational and higher education load nearing parity with population proportion*
4. *Attracting significant numbers of interstate students to higher education offerings, and attaining international enrolments equivalent to 20% of Higher Education student population*
5. *Recognised internationally as a centre of excellence in areas of: tropical knowledge; desert knowledge; and indigenous and cross cultural knowledge*
6. *Providing socially robust knowledge and capacity to underpin policy and delivery in education, health and community services and sustainable development in the Northern Territory and our region.*

(Strategic Plan, 2005)

From what the Audit Panel found, only 18 months into the life of the newly-formed University, it is plausible that the first four goals will be achieved in another 18 months time. The second set of goals are feasible for CDU, but the processes being implemented are too young to permit comment on their likely effectiveness. They will need careful monitoring in 2006 and 2007, while there is still time to make significant changes if that appears to be necessary. Intermediate goal 3 will need to be considered in the light of the high number of Indigenous enrolments at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE). This can be part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BIITE (section 5.2.3).

1.1 *The CDU Difference*

Over the period 2001 to 2003, the Northern Territory University (NTU) worked with the Northern Territory Government and other institutions on various projects for the development of NTU. In 2002, Professor Ron Mackay retired as the Vice-Chancellor of NTU and was replaced by Professor Ken McKinnon. In November 2003, NTU, Centralian College in Alice Springs and the Northern Territory Rural College in Katherine amalgamated to form Charles Darwin University. Professor Helen Garnett took up the appointment of first Vice-Chancellor of CDU in October 2003. In January 2004, the Menzies School of Health Research joined CDU as a

controlled entity of the University. Also, a formal partnership between CDU and the NT Government was established (section 1.4).

CDU is a regional institution whose structure has been designed to integrate VET and Higher Education (HE). It has four main campuses at Casuarina (Darwin), Palmerston (15km outside Darwin), Katherine and Alice Springs.

Creating a new institution out of the merger of several is a difficult task (as experienced by many Australian universities in the early 1990s). There is a need to acknowledge historical continuity while not being inappropriately bound by it. In relation to the latter emphasis, the Panel was told that CDU should not be held hostage by its predecessors. The Panel found that the Performance Portfolio went rather further than this, pulling down a shutter on the past, with language suggesting that CDU is a 'greenfields university'. For example, "We started 2004 with a blank canvas marked with just a few etchings about what our major functions ... might be." (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency Compliance Report, 2003-2004) However, only in May 2005 did the Council consider "a recommended approach to University corporate governance" including "a possible set of overarching University policies" (section 2.1.1), and the University has been operating in the intervening period on the memory of earlier processes (such as the Privacy and Human Resources Policies).

Change and continuity are relevant to CDU's Vision which is, in part, "To be a thriving university that dares to be different ...". The Panel investigated CDU's intention in using this phrase and was told that the essence is that it should be different from what the NTU was. Differences observed by the Panel included the strong emphasis on HE/VET integration (section 3.6), the Partnership with the NT Government (section 1.4), a new corporate structure, and an attempt to minimise the number of committees (and to avoid the term 'committee'). Other intentions that are not yet so evident include breaking down internal barriers to achieve a multi-disciplinary approach, responsiveness to the external environment, and priority on Indigenous matters. The OECD observes that a VET college and a university need population bases of 400,000 and 500,000 respectively. CDU is a university providing both HE and VET on a population base of only 200,000. It is therefore essential and appropriate that it be different from the general pattern.

The Panel did not find among staff or students a resistance to change or a nostalgia for the past, but a thoughtful reflection on what has and has not changed. There is support for some of the change, and even a willingness to countenance further incremental change provided there is stability.

The observations in this Report are made against this background of change (and including the huge interruption caused by *Higher Education Support Act 2003*), with an understanding that CDU is new, but has several significant predecessors. Some activities are described in the Portfolio in the continuing present, whereas they have not yet begun. In many cases, the newness of the structures and processes means that there has not been time for the achievement of results, so there is no evidence for the effectiveness of the processes. In these cases, application of the ADRI approach to analysis of the available information has allowed the Audit Panel to provide comment on the likely effectiveness of the systems (see section 2.4.1).

1.2 Organisational Structure

CDU is organised into five core business areas, three faculties and the Institute of Advanced Studies. The five core business areas are related to the main university purposes (Research, Teaching & Learning, and Community & Access), the need to support these (Business Development) and the need to service these (Corporate Services). To make another statement of differentiation from NTU, the organisational diagram shows the Corporate Services area below the other four, emphasising its role as servant rather than controller.

Each of the five areas is headed by a deputy vice-chancellor (1), pro-vice chancellor (2) or executive director (2). Together with the Vice-Chancellor, they comprise the executive managers of the University. These six executive managers, together with the three faculty deans and the Dean of Indigenous Research and Education are termed the 'senior managers' and comprise the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group (VCMG). An explicit mentoring/understudy relationship exists between each dean and a member of the executive.

The three faculties contain 11 schools and there are three schools in the Institute of Advanced Studies.

1.3 *CDU's External Image*

Staff, students and the community evince a sense of pride in the University. It is recognised as having a significant role in the NT community, and any criticisms voiced are usually constructively intended to lead to improvement. There is some perception in the community that CDU is too relaxed, and – due to the Territory characteristics of remoteness and transience of professionals – that it must be of poor quality. Conversely, as the NT is increasingly attracting large international companies, the presence of an internationally-known university is a major indicator of sophistication and supplier of professional staff.

Some members of the community comment that the University (perhaps NTU rather than CDU) has been somewhat arrogant in its position as the sole Territory university, expecting people to come to it, rather than being outgoing, and is not responsive to contacts, eg to requests to bring prospective students on campus or in returning telephone calls.

The Audit Panel was given some examples of business going elsewhere because of lack of responsiveness of the University to outside agencies, and subsequent business not being offered to the University. CDU has made a preliminary assessment of how it "currently meets quality management system standards" relating to ISO9001:2000. Through its approach to risk management CDU has identified client service and meeting stakeholder expectations as major risks and is progressing actions to reduce these risks (see section 2.1.2).

CDU's Council is aware of the negative perception of the University. It believes that the situation has improved, due to the appointment of high-quality senior staff, but acknowledges that more work is needed. Members of the community are quick to observe that when they find the 'right' member of staff for their particular need, the individual staff member is almost invariably helpful and responsive. Inculcating a more general culture of responsiveness would improve the accessibility of the University to members of the community.

The community also has some unrealistic expectations, wanting CDU to cover every possible area of study, although CDU is already stretched quite thinly to cover its intended research, teaching and community responsibilities. These expectations need managing. The primary responsibility for this lies with the University itself, and some improvement in the media and communications area (section 7.6) could help here. There is scope not only for media material that extols CDU's successes, but also for contextual material that explains the limits of what it can do.

As the NT Government has so explicitly recognised the critical role of CDU in the Territory through the Partnership (next section), it could assist in this task. Being seen to work successfully with the Government for the good of the NT has great potential for managing community expectations. Members of the Peak Group have spoken of the Partnership to other arms of government, and could usefully extend this activity out into the community.

It is not clear that the Government has data on Year 12 school leavers going interstate. Tracking this is essential for the post-school education environment in the NT, and would be a natural aspect of the Government / University partnership (next section). This would yield valuable evidence on which University strategies to retain young people in the Territory might be further developed. A positive trend in retention would be likely to enhance the image of CDU.

1.4 Partnership with the NT Government

“Part of the impetus for establishment of the new University was the potential for establishment of mutually beneficial linkages between the NT Government and the institution ... a formal Government-University partnership was signed in June 2003 ... A major challenge ... was aligning the different expectations of the two parties and ensuring that officers from each party had a realistic understanding of the operating environments, constraints and priorities of the partner. Operation of the Partnership is overseen by a Peak Group, jointly led by the Vice Chancellor and the Chief Executive of the Office of the Chief Minister. Other Peak Group members [are] the Chief Executives of the Department of Employment Education and Training, and the Department of Business Industry and Resource Development, the Pro Vice Chancellor, Teaching and Learning and the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Community and Access.” (PF p10)

The Partnership priorities have been categorised as follows:

- Growing resident capacity in the Territory
- Meeting Government needs
- Reorganising the University to better meet Territory needs
- Particular projects to enable Indigenous social and economic development

with specific projects in each category. (PF p11)

This Partnership, which is rare in Australia, has great potential, and many achievements are already being realised. A very positive aspect of the arrangement is that it emphasises partnership rather than seeing the Government as buying services, and it incorporates forward planning. Staff secondment is taking place in both directions. Some public relations work is already carried out, but there is scope for more.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends CDU for establishing a high-level partnership with the NT Government for the mutual benefit of the Territory and the University.

Another aspect of the ‘CDU difference’ is an intent to look outwards, identify external issues, and use those to drive University activities, whether in teaching or research. The Panel observed that this betokens a major change in mindset, and that it will be necessary to balance university independence and utility, particularly in the context of the Partnership. The CDU Council is conscious of this.

1.5 Quality Systems

1.5.1 Quality Policy

The Quality Policy is featured as the main University policy, but it (like the other policies) is new (section 2.1.1). The Policy states that “The University is committed to benchmarking its activities against appropriate benchmark partners, meeting or exceeding relevant national and international standards in its activities, [and] identifying opportunities for improvement through rigorous self-assessment”. The Policy also commits to using an ADRI loop, carrying out a cycle of reviews and co-ordinating quality-related activities across the University.

The Policy allocates to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning (PVC(T&L)) the overall responsibility for CDU's quality framework, and the Portfolio shows the Planning and Quality Group, which appears to relate to quality University-wide, as part of the Office of the PVC(T&L). However, also in the Portfolio, the PVC(T&L) is described more specifically as being responsible for "quality assurance in teaching and learning" (p25), and the Policy states that each head of the five business areas "is responsible for issuing processes and guidelines that specify the University's requirements on matters related to quality" in their area, and "for monitoring that such activities are carried out". How this will work is still to be determined: 'issuing processes' can be a very active step or could simply involve interpreting material provided centrally. The Panel learned that each executive is expected to take active responsibility for quality in their respective areas. Analogously, while the role statement for the Senior Quality and Planning Officer includes the phrase "University-wide assurance and improvement of quality", the position seems primarily responsible for quality in the teaching and learning area, with only a subsidiary role in the other areas (not a CDU-wide 'quality manager').

There is not yet a sense of an overall university-wide quality system. The Quality Policy requires the Office of the VC to ensure that a cycle of reviews is undertaken. The Panel was informed that at present reviews are only at program level but that faculty or school reviews are planned (section 2.4.2).

Benchmarking and comparison need more attention to satisfy the requirements of the Policy. Some work has been done with other members of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in benchmarking research (section 4.1.1).

1.5.2 Self-Review

As part of its preparation for the AUQA audit, CDU undertook a self-review using an ADRI framework. The review addressed six themes relating to the five core business areas (section 1.2) plus overall leadership and resulted in a set of 'priority improvements' for 2005. This is a very ambitious list and the Panel investigated the progress on the intended actions. The Panel was informed that a great deal has been completed, while the targets for other actions have been revised to 2006. Achievement of the priorities is being monitored in the various areas of responsibility, but there is no consolidated report. Given the very extensive nature of the original list, it would be useful to produce such a document to reassure stakeholders that it had not been unrealistic. The document would also provide encouragement for staff as it would enable them to see the progress being made.

Although the review took account of the external environment to some extent, and the priority list has a short section on external relations, the action list is not integrated with the action schedule arising from the CDU/NT Government Partnership.

1.5.3 ISO9001:2000

In the assessment, referred to earlier, of how CDU's Quality Management System meets the standards for a QMS for education and training organisations as set out in ISO9001:2000, the possibility of these standards being applied to a University wide CDU QMS was canvassed. No action has yet been taken on implementing such an approach.

1.6 *Champions*

"Within Faculties, each School identifies from the academic staff a separate Champion for the areas of teaching and learning, research, community and access, and business development who work closely with the Head of School, the relevant member of the Executive and the School's clients to advance the particular core business area." (PF p9) One factor in determining the

schools in the new University was that they should be large enough to permit the selection of staff with these responsibilities.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends CDU for the innovative concept of school-based ‘champions’ across its main identified areas of core business.

This is a creative and interesting concept, though it currently has some flaws. The list of activities expected of champions according to the role statement is quite daunting, and CDU itself notes that “there is still some work to effectively embed Champions in their role.” (PF p9)

From extensive discussion with champions in these four areas in different schools, the Panel identified the following issues that need attention if the champion concept is to be generally effective:

- despite the existence of a formal statement of the responsibilities of champions, many feel that their role is unclear;
- with 11 schools and champions in four areas, CDU needs 44 members of the academic staff with the relevant skills. This is quite a drain on the resources of a small institution and it is difficult to fill all the roles. Some champions feel under pressure to take the job, and some feel that they do not have the necessary abilities to carry it out (and have so informed colleagues who have come to them for assistance in the relevant area);
- they are seen as resource people and communication channels, but lack authority to move things forward in their area (eg to get staff actively involved in a specific business development scheme, or the use of a new teaching mode);
- there is rarely a workload allowance for the position, and champions find they lack the time to carry out their role effectively; and
- the champions do not have a budget to promote activity in their area.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that CDU reflect on the concept of ‘champions’, possibly reducing the number of positions, implementing a more formal appointment process, and ensuring that the incumbent has the ability, support and authority to carry out the required tasks.

In general, staff have most difficulty with the Business Development Champion role as the other three types of champions are in the three core functional areas associated with a university. Conversely (and again as an overall assessment), the research champions seem most advanced in carrying out their role. More comment is made on champions in the respective areas.

1.7 Communications

It is rare not to encounter criticism of communication within organisations, especially loosely-coupled ones like universities, and CDU detected this in the recent self-review (PF p21, 23). It is not surprising that, in a period of such rapid change, there is a great deal of information flowing around but yet people do not feel they are receiving the communications that they want. Also, there is a widespread feeling that the flow of information is generally downwards in conjunction with overly detailed and rather stifling direction, but that senior management is not readily accessible for messages up the chain although there are many good things happening at grass roots level. It may be that the currently large number of people in acting roles is exacerbating problems in this area.

It is likely that the situation will improve as the rate of change slows down, but in the meantime there are some steps that could be taken. In addition to existing mechanisms such as the staff newsletter which began in March 2005, deans could be encouraged to ensure the facilitation of

two-way communication (see also section 2.3.3). Adding the Chair of Academic Board as a member of VCMG might also both enhance communication and make a statement about the individual academic voice at the top management level.

The Panel noted that most of the interviewees at the Audit Visit had a copy of the Performance Portfolio, which was a good cross-institutional communication mechanism.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that CDU develop its approach to communications, to ensure that decisions and information about changes are communicated to staff and that their views are heard by the leadership group.

There may be scope for ‘communication champions’.

2 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 *Council and its Committees*

2.1.1 Council Structure

The CDU Council was specifically designed on the model of a Board of Trustees to comply with the National Governance Protocols. Despite this, DEST found it to be non-compliant in various ways, and the Council is addressing these comments. The Council has 15 members including one postgraduate and one undergraduate student, and one academic from each of VET and HE. The Council is on the small side for Australian university councils, but in line with the current thinking about how to make such bodies more effective. Council has only one Indigenous member at present. CDU's expressed regional orientation and desire to be led by issues coming from its environment point to the need to try to increase the Indigenous membership of Council. To stay in touch with the total University community, Council meets on the different campuses.

The Council engaged Professor Robert Smith, a former vice-chancellor of two universities, to lead an extensive and thorough induction program.

Council members believe that they are adequately monitoring the University, and are aware of the need for improvements in some areas, primarily to the University's image, the University administration and the work with stakeholders in the VET area. Council approved the policy framework in May 2005 and expects to consider proposals for details of the processes later. It is aware that a great deal of the material in the Performance Portfolio is marked to be 'developed' or 'implemented' or 'monitored' in 2005, and the Council is keeping abreast of the position.

Council has introduced a self-assessment process, for both the Council and its members.

2.1.2 Council Committees

Council has four committees, namely the Nominations, Honorary Degrees and Audit & Risk Committees, and Academic Board. The Panel found that the majority of the committee work related to governance is the responsibility of the Audit & Risk Committee (A&RC), which therefore has a very heavy load. The Panel also noted that Council meets only about five times per year, which is rather a small number of meetings, particularly at this early stage of CDU when the changes are particularly rapid. However, the Panel was informed that these two factors are balanced by having the A&RC meet between the Council meetings, so that the totality of the Council business is transacted effectively. The Panel also noted the extensive briefing of all Council members on financial matters. Nonetheless, the heavy responsibility placed on the A&RC means that finance and audit matters are not well-separated, and the Panel suggests that CDU consider whether it would be useful to have a Finance Committee separate from a dedicated Audit Committee. For this to be effective, the two committees should have distinct (though possibly overlapping) membership.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that CDU consider the introduction of a Council Finance Committee distinct from a separate Audit Committee.

In 2004, the University management commissioned the development of a detailed risk assessment and management program. This put customer service at the top of the list, followed by financial viability and staffing. The risk review influenced the development of the policy framework

mentioned above. Risk owners are now required to report regularly to the A&RC, and CDU intends to contract for an internal audit service to address the findings.

2.2 *Senior Management*

2.2.1 Vice-Chancellor's Management Group

The VCMG (section 1.2) has prime responsibility for University planning. Its weekly meetings provide an opportunity for the VC to receive advice on the respective areas of responsibility of the members of the group.

2.2.2 Academic Board

Unlike many dual sector universities, CDU has an integrated Academic Board, covering both the VET and HE components of the University. The Board has 19 members, comprising the members of the VCMG (except the executive directors), four HE academics, four VET academics, a member of the IAS, a student and a separately appointed Chair. The Panel was informed that the former Vice-Chancellor had been planning revisions to the NTU Academic Board, for example to make it smaller than has eventually been put in place for CDU. The Panel was informed that intent with that plan was that the Chair of the Board be a member of VCMG and the Panel believes that (regardless of whether it was part of an earlier plan) this would in fact be an advantageous arrangement with the current Board (section 1.7). The Chair is already a member of Council.

Academic Board (AB) is a subcommittee of Council, and its functions are expressed in terms of providing assistance or recommendations to Council. Its scope includes all academic matters, including academic policy, research strategies, program approval and review, teaching evaluation, and quality enhancement. In practice, it deals directly only with 'higher level' issues, and carries out its other work mainly through two subcommittees, namely the Teaching and Learning Panel (TLP) and the Research Panel.

The AB Panels are heavily dominated by official members of the AB (eg the TLP includes the PVC(T&L) and the Chair and Deputy Chair of AB) and seem to be given the responsibility for actually making decisions. So, for example, although Council is the only body with the authority to approve new programs, the minutes of the various bodies show that: the TLP reports to AB that it has 'approved' academic programs; AB 'receives and notes' those outcomes; and Council 'notes' the report from the AB.

The course accreditation diagram on page 29 of the Performance Portfolio reinforces this interpretation of the actions of the TLP. The Audit Panel found no record of Council having delegated responsibility to Academic Board or its committees. Further there was no record in Council minutes of the Council approving the courses (cf. section 3.2.1).

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that recommendations relating to course accreditation and reaccreditation be made formally to Council; or alternatively that Council formally delegate specific responsibility.

Also, the Performance Portfolio stated that "issues such as academic structures ... are outside the domain of the Board" (PF p27). The Panel investigated this and found that the AB expects to be able to comment on changes, but nonetheless it reinforces the view that the Board itself does not play a significant role in academic affairs.

2.3 *Academic Units*

2.3.1 Faculties

There are three faculties, namely Law, Business & Arts, Education, Health & Science and Technology with four, four and three schools respectively. Both the faculties and the schools are new combinations of disciplines and areas.

Previously, student enrolment and human resource functions were located at faculty level, but these have now been centralised.

There is also the Institute of Advanced Studies with three schools (section 4.3).

2.3.2 Deans

Each faculty is headed by a dean and the Audit Panel investigated the role of this position. Deans are responsible for co-ordinating the work of schools, setting up faculty working groups as necessary, and ensuring that the schools collaborate. They are responsible for taking the initiative in issues that are faculty-wide. They manage the budget and the heads of school and approve staff appointments. As members of VCMG, they are responsible for implementing planned University actions. Active attention to quality at faculty level is at an early stage, and there is no orientation for deans.

While the expectations for Deans are that they function as leaders it may be that they are providing a greater emphasis on coordination functions. This may mean that CDU is not getting the best value from this position. The Panel also noted that the VC and central areas have many links directly to schools.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that CDU clarify the expectations of deans and heads of school and ensure that performance is monitored through performance reviews.

The faculty executive officers support the deans in working with schools and liaising with the centre. A good deal of their work relates to financial matters. The faculty executive officers meet to share ideas on matters of common interest.

2.3.3 Schools

There are 11 schools in three faculties, plus three schools in the IAS. Each school is grouped in terms of cognate disciplines, contains VET and HE and is geographically spread. In creating the academic units of CDU, school size was considered in relation to covering the desired range of activities, including providing champions, proposing and creating courses, etc.

Schools and heads of school (HoS) feature more significantly in the Performance Portfolio than do faculties and deans. As mentioned, there is a great deal of consultation and contact by central areas directly with the schools, which apparently bypasses deans and faculties. Schools have a good deal of autonomy, and are responsible for accreditation, staffing, budget and the VET/HE link. Schools are allocated staff numbers on the basis of a formula using national norms. With this range of tasks, faculty HoSs feel under pressure, and see the dean as a mentor rather than a manager.

The first two years of CDU have seen rapid change and now may be an appropriate time for CDU to review the changes that have been made, carry out a mapping exercise to check the transition from previous policies to replacement policies, and ensure all fronts are covered.

2.3.4 Devolution

AUQA does not take a particular view of the balance of central direction and devolved control, but comments on the structures adopted in relation to their achievement or otherwise of the institution's objectives. CDU has centralised some activities, while those devolved are largely devolved to schools rather than faculties. This may have weakened the faculties and maintained the silos that CDU wishes to demolish, and made some people feel alienated from, or at least ignorant of, central decisions.

The Director of Regional and Remote has an oversight and management role of regional and remote activities. Central/school co-ordination in this area may need strengthening (section 5.5). In respect of Indigenous studies, the decision has been made to move from devolved (the originally planned Faculty of Indigenous Studies) to central (section 5.2.2).

The Panel noted that the Common Units (section 3.5.1) are implemented in schools but centrally co-ordinated. This composite model could work for other functions as well.

2.4 *Planning*

2.4.1 The Planning Process

The planning process described in the Performance Portfolio was an initial activity for the new institution, extending over 2003 to 2005. The resulting 'Strategic Directions 2004-2005' was incrementally approved by Council up to February 2005, and a routine planning cycle is yet to develop. On the basis of the Strategic Directions document, schools have written one-page statements of their core business and focus. These are useful in providing information about the school, but also in keeping the school focused on what it decided to do.

The extent to which CDU is new or a continuing entity has been discussed in section 1.1. Regardless of where on this 'old/new spectrum' CDU is located, the creation of CDU was used as an opportunity to design many systems anew. An AUQA audit panel usually seeks the strategic plan from three or four years before the audit, and investigates the extent of achievement of the goals laid out therein. In the case of this audit of CDU, the only relevant plans are new, like the overall Strategic Directions (2004-2005, but still being approved in 2005) and the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan (2005-2006) (section 3.1). Therefore, this Audit Report refers more to the Approach and Deployment segments of the ADRI cycle than to the Results and Improvement segments.

2.4.2 Linking Planning with Quality Assurance

CDU "recognises that it has more to do in linking planning and quality assurance" through planning, reporting, monitoring, review and improvement. It intends to create and monitor a set of key performance indicators for core business areas, with "appropriate analysis of indicator data with feedback loops, and with appropriate external reference". Regular reviews of academic and administrative organisational units will be introduced with a schedule, terms of reference and external input. "To date the University has been involved in relatively limited benchmarking, generally restricted to data comparisons rather than structured comparisons of process and practice" and hopes that joining the group of New Generation Universities will facilitate this. Major outputs will be reported to and considered by Council. (PF p20)

The Panel endorses these observations, stressing that meaningful external comparison is necessary for independent validation of standards, and affirms CDU's intention to move in this direction.

The Panel also saw the results of CDU's external compliance audit against the twelve standards of the Australian Qualifications Training Framework carried out in September 2004. The Panel supports CDU's intention to consider "how self-assessment and preparation and outcomes of external audits can be co-ordinated for optimal benefit for the whole of the institution" (PF p20) (and AUQA is willing to discuss the timing of audit with CDU and other dual-sector institutions to co-ordinate their HE and VET external audit requirements if possible).

3 CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING

According to the Strategic Plan published in 2005, CDU's Primary Objective in this area is:

To expand student numbers in a managed way, ensuring that Charles Darwin University is the institution of choice for regional students by providing an appropriate breadth and depth of high quality programs in an efficient and effective way.

The associated Enabling Objectives are:

1. *To have an increased commitment to learner-centred approaches to both vocational education and higher education.*
2. *To increase the use of resource-based approaches to teaching and learning including, where appropriate technology-mediated approaches.*
3. *To develop a range of practical pathways between vocational and Higher Education offerings and programs, and so maximising articulation between these offerings and programs.*
4. *To have University research activities inform and support University teaching and learning activities, particularly in relation to postgraduate coursework offerings.*
5. *To strengthen the commitment to trans-disciplinary approaches to education.*
6. *To induct and up-skill staff in teaching and learning arenas, including curriculum design, delivery and assessment methodologies.*
7. *To develop a comprehensive evaluative framework for the teaching and learning enterprise.*
8. *To increase engagement with the local professional community in delivery of programs.*

3.1 Objectives and Strategies

Although the Primary Objective may seem obvious, it is not trivial. Because CDU cannot cover all areas of study, it can never be the institution of choice for all NT students, even though it is the only university in the NT (and has 85% of the VET enrolments). It is on track for improving the quality and provision of programs, but has yet to target precisely which teaching areas it can and cannot cover. At present, student numbers are static rather than increasing. There are plans to increase the number of overseas students (section 6.2).

As noted in section 2.4.1, the relevant plans are still very young. Of the 21 action items under teaching and learning in the 'Priority Improvements for 2005', 17 are targeted for the second half of 2005, ie after the AUQA audit. (The other four relate to the Federal Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, with target dates dictated by the requirements of that Fund.) Similarly, the above eight enabling objectives are listed in the 'Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan, 2005-2006', so that by the end of the AUQA audit, only 25% of the relevant period had elapsed. Many target dates are still well in the future, with a "draft updated version" of the Plan to be "produced by December 2006". In the Plan, the eight objectives are grouped in various ways into several 'priority areas' with associated actions and indicators. The Performance Portfolio (p24) also lists the eight objectives with nine associated 'institutional teaching and learning strategies' which have been replaced by 'actions in the development of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan.

The Audit Panel discussed this with various staff and officers of the University, and there appears to be recognition that there is a need for a wider understanding of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan, and how strategies and actions are aligned with the institutional objectives for teaching and learning. The Panel also noted that one of the VC's "desired outcomes

for Charles Darwin University” is “Integration of Indigenous issues across all business areas” (PF p3) and that a “shorter term” goal for CDU is to be “recognised as the people’s university in the Northern Territory – as a cultural and intellectual asset” (PF p4). To give effect to these, it would be useful for Indigenous aspects to feature more explicitly in the teaching and learning objectives.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms CDU’s recognition that there is a need for a wider understanding of the Teaching and Learning Operational Priorities Plan, the way it addresses institutional objectives for teaching and learning, and how strategies and actions are aligned to the objectives.

3.2 Course Approval

3.2.1 Accreditation

At CDU “a course is a program of study formally approved/accredited that leads to an academic award of the University. A unit is the basic building block of a course and has a set amount of academic work normally undertaken over a semester, while a specialisation is an approved combination of units from one identified disciplinary or multi-disciplinary sequence/strand” (PF p29).

A new Course Accreditation and Re-Accreditation Process was introduced in 2004. A key aspect of this Process is the separation of resource and planning approval from quality (academic) accreditation (PF p29). Both sequences begin in the school, but the former goes through the faculty and University executive, while subsequently – following planning approval – the latter goes through the faculty teaching and learning group and the Teaching and Learning Panel (TLP) of Academic Board. Teaching and learning champions (section 3.4) in the relevant school(s) are involved in the process, and may work in detail with the course proposers to ensure that the proposal meets the specifications. In the academic accreditation phase, the proposal goes from the faculty teaching and learning group to the Planning and Quality Group (sections 1.5.1, 3.3.1) for a check of the documentation. After that, it goes to the TLP. As mentioned in section 2.2.2, there is a lack of clarity on where the final decision is made, and this needs attention.

After its first use, the Course Accreditation and Re-Accreditation Process (CARP) was re-evaluated and some changes made. The resource approval phase was not well done, with inconsistencies across faculties, and only a rather cursory attention to library holdings and IT support. Following reflections on the effectiveness of its operation, consideration is being given to revising aspects of CARP and associated documentation to ensure that approved courses are adequately supported.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends CDU for the emerging co-ordinated attention to academic and resource considerations within the course accreditation process.

For the development of a new course, the new procedures stipulate that a Course Advisory Group be established to assist with the accreditation. This Group includes senior people from external organisations. When a course is approved and being implemented, it is overseen by a Board of Studies that includes external people, though usually not so senior. CDU has experienced some confusion in the implementation of these new requirements, and the terms of reference are to be revised in 2005. Also, as mentioned by staff, in a small community, ‘the same few faces’ tend to appear many times. CDU should attempt to get Indigenous representation on all, or at least an increasing number of, course advisory groups.

A course re-accreditation schedule has been drawn up to ensure that all courses are re-accredited over the next five years.

3.2.2 Structural Issues

CDU wishes to encourage interdisciplinary teaching and break down silos (see Enabling Objective 5), but the budgetary model is neutral to this rather than providing incentives to promote it. The Panel heard of some instances of inter-school co-operation, but if these objectives are to be achieved, it should be made easier.

At present, CDU has rather a high number of HE units (947 units owned and taught by CDU; 431 franchised from Open Universities Australia). Some programs and courses have unviably small numbers, and CDU is looking to carry out a rationalisation exercise and re-balance its offerings. As noted in section 1.3, community expectations mean that this plan is not well-received by students and the community.

In 2004, CDU introduced Alternative Exit Awards to deter enrolment in some lower level courses with low enrolments by forcing students to enrol for a three-year degree but allowing them to exit early, with a completed qualification rather than a 'not complete' record. After one year, the exit qualification would be a diploma, and after two years an associate degree. This scheme may also improve access and success, and is a positive scheme for a population characterised by mobility and unfamiliarity with the university world.

Any proposal for these Awards is included in course accreditation and re-accreditation proposals to ensure that the 'partial' awards are coherent and not unfinished. CDU has discussed these awards with DEST to avoid problems with non-completion rates.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends CDU for the introduction of Alternative Exit Awards.

3.3 *Teaching and Learning Development Group*

3.3.1 Staff Development

The Teaching and Learning Development Group sits within the Office of the PVC(T&L). As mentioned in section 1.5.1, the Planning and Quality Group is also within this Office, and there is some lack of clarity about the scope of the latter group. The Portfolio shows the two groups as separately reporting to the PVC(T&L), but with the recent appointment to a professorial level position of Leader, Teaching and Learning Development, it is expected that strong quality leadership in the teaching and learning area will be taken over by this position.

It has been noted that staff development did not feature highly in the NTU (section 7.2), and this is still a major gap in CDU. At this stage, the Teaching and Learning Development Group is oriented towards resource production, on-line delivery, and related advice to staff, providing support for academic staff in course design and the use of Learnline. It does not function as a general-purpose academic staff professional development unit, but the Leader, Teaching and Learning Development is expected to strengthen its capability in this direction. The Audit Panel endorses the need for such a development.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms CDU's recognition of the need for the Teaching and Learning Development Group to have a greater focus on professional development for academic staff.

The Panel was informed of the intention to enter into service-level agreements between the Group and faculties and schools to cover issues such as professional development for teaching and learning, and other academic support, as well as the production of teaching materials for on-line and off-campus modes.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends CDU's commitment to learning and teaching as signalled by, inter alia, the senior appointment of a leader in this area.

3.3.2 On-line Courses

The first two Enabling Objectives in the teaching and learning area include evincing "an increased commitment to learner-centred approaches" and increasing "the use of resource-based approaches to teaching and learning including, where appropriate technology-mediated approaches".

These objectives are being addressed, in part, by converting courses and units to on-line form. A major effort is underway to convert as many units as possible. Some staff interviewed by the Panel were actively working on this project, though the Panel did not find a general commitment to on-line and flexible learning. Nonetheless, the work of the Teaching and Learning Development Group is resulting in a rapid increase in the number of units available on-line. From 25 in Semester 1 2002 it jumped to 250 in Semester 1 2003, and is close to 350 in Semester 1 2005. This is expected to double within another year. The Group has adequate resources through that level of growth, but if CDU further encourages on-line units, the area will need an increase in resources.

The Academic Development Team advises staff on the creation of teaching materials, and the Resource Production Team assists in or actually handles the production of the materials. Resource Production predominantly handles units for external mode, with the production of materials for internal delivery being the responsibility of the lecturer and faculty. Material for external delivery also becomes the lecturer's responsibility if it is not provided to Resource Production by specified due dates. This produces an unfortunate conflation that a lecturer who had already had difficulty meeting a material deadline is now responsible for the difficult task of conversion and production. Some explicit attention to consistency of presentation across the different producers of external materials seems to be warranted.

The official and only supported course management system is Learnline, based on an enterprise version of Blackboard, but the Panel found some evidence of the use of other systems, and CDU could usefully ensure that its official platform is used, to avoid possible problems. In order to offer a unit through Learnline, staff must attend one of several available workshops. About 60 attended in 2004 and a like number in the first half of 2005.

3.4 Teaching and Learning Champions

Section 1.6 sets out some problems with the system of champions, and the following comments on teaching and learning champions should be read in conjunction with that section.

Although training is not on the role specifications for teaching and learning champions, it is not unreasonable for staff to assume that someone with that title is able to advise and train her/his colleagues in effective teaching methods and student learning styles. This is quite a specialised staff developer role, and there is no reason to expect that there will be 11 such people, distributed one per school, in a small university.

The newly appointed Leader, Teaching and Learning Development hopes to support the Teaching and Learning champions by moulding them into a coherent group, rather than isolated individuals. It may be possible through appropriate meetings to provide them with the enhanced skills that they need to be effective.

They should also be allowed to be more involved in the relevant processes. Consideration could be given to making teaching and learning champions aware of those complaints that relate to teaching and learning. In this way they will accumulate knowledge of teaching and learning issues in the school that will enable them to perform their job better.

See section 1.6 for the need for attention to the role of champions if they are to achieve their intended purposes.

3.5 *Generic Skills*

3.5.1 Common Unit Program

The Common Unit Program was introduced by NTU in 1998. It was intended to address the need for all beginning university students to have fundamental academic skills and background knowledge for academic success. Its specific aims are to:

- assist students to develop fundamental skills as a foundation for university study;
- develop students' understandings of the Northern Territory region and cultures;
- introduce students to effective ways of learning at university;
- give students from all faculties a sense of learning together; and
- broaden the range of students' learning and knowledge and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

In 1999, the Program was evaluated by a team from the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne. Since 2000, the Common Units Committee has been responding to this evaluation.

In her report on curriculum redesign in the Common Units Program (2004), Nicola Prichard also refers to a suggestion in the report of the AUQA trial audit of NTU (in 2001) that "NTU attend to the focus, applicability and value of the Common Core units to the courses of study of students and the learning objectives for relevant qualifications" and notes that the Committee has also responded to these recommendations. Most recently, CDU has been responding to guidance from the AVCC by aiming to ensure that all students are provided with knowledge about Indigenous Australia - initially through the common units but in time through Indigenisation of the curriculum more generally.

The current situation is that students complete one core unit on Regional and Indigenous Issues, and one of two other Literacy units, namely Academic Literacies or Design & Innovation: Communicating Technology. The former is tailored more to Humanities/Social Sciences students and the latter to Technology/Science students, with students being encouraged to choose the accordingly.

The Audit Panel observed a polarisation of views on the Course Units Program, from 'essential' to 'a waste of time'. The Panel's view is that they are a valuable contribution to the achievement

of CDU's goals, but that they would benefit from further attention to their implementation, with emphasis where appropriate on RPL arrangements, the option for students to be challenge tested with assessment items or final exams and to make use of comparable learning experiences from other units. In general, negative attitudes to the program may be due to its prescriptive approach to the units offered, rather than being focused on the development of each student's skills and knowledge. As the Course Units Program is early in a student's career at CDU, it may colour the student's view of CDU.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that the intended outcomes of the Common Unit Program are achieved and that it is catering for the different ability levels and knowledge of different students.

The Common Units Committee consists of staff responsible for the units. It is a working group of the TLP and with the expectation that AB will be informed via T&L Panel reports of common units matters. It is a subcommittee of the TLP and does not report to AB. The Program is not so much about teaching and learning per se but about the totality of the CDU academic direction and student experience, and it would be useful to ensure that AB is aware of the Program and its effects.

3.5.2 Graduate Attributes

CDU states that one of its teaching and learning strategies is to "Undertake a re-identification of graduate attributes and explicit consideration of curriculum that delivers these" (PF p24). NTU would have had stated graduate attributes for some time, as this is a requirement for federal government funding. However, attention to them has been very patchy. CDU has recognised that a new approach is necessary. The new Leader, Teaching and Learning Development has taken up the quoted strategy as a major project for 2005. It is intended to use the attributes, and renewed attention to them, as a major mechanism for curriculum change (an approach that has been used successfully elsewhere).

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms CDU's intent to restate graduate attributes and review the curriculum in terms of their achievement.

The Common Units should clearly feature as part of the graduate attribute strategy.

3.6 VET

3.6.1 Integration

AUQA does not audit the VET operations of dual-sector institutions as this would duplicate the VET external review process. However, it does take account of the relation between HE and VET in the institution, and whether this relation is as represented by the institution.

In the case of CDU, the intent is that VET and HE be integrated, and many of the structures and practices reflect this. Some examples are that the Academic Board is responsible for and contains members from both sectors, each school contains the VET and HE areas in the respective disciplines, champions are expected to include both sectors in their work, VET staff are becoming involved in research, the Planning and Quality Group assists with accreditation of both HE and VET units, and the Leader, Teaching and Learning Development is responsible for this function in both sectors.

Nonetheless, universities are not automatically associated with VET courses in the Australian mind, and CDU looks to the general public more like a continuation of NTU than like a new VET and HE institution. The Panel was given examples of VET business being given to other providers, and even to regional training organisations in other states, because the purchasers have found CDU VET to be unresponsive to their needs. There is therefore work to do to ensure that the integrity of VET is not jeopardised by the merger. If the integrated structures as mentioned in the previous paragraph are to result in integrated / articulated study, there must be substance behind them.

For example, if schools are to include both VET and HE, it is essential that HoSs have a full understanding of both modes, and CDU has recognised this need. In early 2005, the University requested HoSs where the Head was not from the VET sector, to nominate one of the existing champions with a background in VET to take a special interest in, and assist the HoS with, VET issues to ensure that there was an adequate skill base in schools to cover VET issues. Conversely HoSs with a VET background were asked to nominate a champion with HE experience to assist with understanding of HE issues. If this approach proves to be insufficiently effective, it may be that a 'VET associate dean' in each faculty, not with line responsibility for VET, but with a role more like a 'VET champion', would help this process.

3.6.2 Articulation

AUQA's attention also extends to the articulation between HE and VET, whether within the one institution or between institutions. MCEETYA has adopted a set of principles regarding articulation and credit transfer and has asked AUQA to look carefully at this aspect. CDU is paying particular attention to the articulation and 'embedding' of VET courses. Articulation was the topic for a VC's planning day not long before the Audit Visit. The Panel was informed of some successful instances of articulation, both within schools and between schools. There are some creative approaches, in which students are enrolled for off-campus work at the VET level, and then brought to campus once they have a sense that university study is feasible for them. CDU needs to ensure that staff have a good understanding of both VET and HE and of their relationship.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms CDU's work on VET/HE articulation and the need to ensure that staff and students are made aware of the mechanisms for, possibilities of and benefits of articulation between HE and VET courses.

3.7 *Evaluations*

In late 2003, CDU commissioned the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne to review its evaluation systems. The review made 18 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Academic Board. A key element of the recommendations was the adoption of mandatory unit/module evaluation with evaluation of teachers being optional (except in the context of probation, promotion or teaching awards). It was announced in October 2004 that, starting in that semester, units and modules in both HE and VET will be required to be evaluated every two years. The modules to be evaluated each semester will be selected by the PVC(T&L).

The Performance Portfolio states that "Results of unit and teacher evaluation are provided to individual staff and also to the Head of School. Schools will be required to respond to the outcomes of unit evaluation and results of unit evaluations and School responses will be published." (p38)

Although results were available from the first run of the new system by the time the Performance Portfolio was written, response rates were not high (an average of 10 per unit), and it is too early to determine the effectiveness of the system. Discussions with students and staff suggest that there is a low level of student awareness of results of evaluations, and little feedback to students on effects, though the Panel was given some examples of staff feedback to the next cohort on actions taken. The evaluations are seen by the dean and HoS, who are expected to take action on the evaluations, but there is still some uncertainty and inconsistency. Staff too feel they are trying to catch up with the changes and become familiar with the new system.

As mentioned in section 7.2, CDU suffers, like other employers in the NT, from a high turnover in staff. This has led to a lack of coverage for courses, met by staff teaching outside their area, and resulting in criticism through the evaluations (cf. section 7.2).

The Leader, Teaching and Learning Development intends to use the student evaluations as the starting point for a strong move towards evidence-based improvement.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms CDU's intent to make greater use of student evaluations in achieving improvement.

In 2003 and 2004, the Teaching and Learning Development Group surveyed external students on their satisfaction, but the response rate was very low. The Faculty of Education, Health and Science conducted a First-Year Student Satisfaction Survey in 2003 and has introduced some changes in 2005 as a result.

3.8 Assessment

Course outlines provided to students are generally comprehensive, and include assessment requirements. Boards of examiners are convened for each award, but the Portfolio identifies the need for guidelines for their operation (PF p35). CDU aims to have these in place by the end of 2005.

These guidelines may also address the issue of standards. CDU currently relies on professional associations to address the achievement and comparability of standards between CDU and other Australian institutions through their external accreditation processes. However, this does not cover other disciplines, and in any case the University itself needs to take responsibility for its standards. In this respect staff mobility is of some assistance, as CDU benefits from the external comparison provided by incoming staff.

There has been a move towards more examinations as one way of reducing the likelihood of plagiarism.

Currently, the data on student progress and completions is patchy. As a combination of several previous institutions, CDU has a significant task in creating its own comprehensive database that provides important historical data and allows its meaningful use.

4 RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

According to the Strategic Plan, published in 2005, CDU's Primary Objective in this area is:

To both enhance and specialise research activities within the institution with the aim of maximising the benefit to both the region and the wider academic community in the areas of Natural and Cultural Resource Management; Human Health and Well-being; Teaching, Learning and Living; Community, Development and Identity

The associated Enabling Objectives are:

1. *Research priorities and capabilities continue to be of benefit to the region.*
2. *Research is focussed on the highest priority themes.*
3. *Increase research activity in every School.*
4. *Increase the number of high quality research students (particularly from interstate).*
5. *Increase resident research capacity in the Territory.*
6. *Support regional interest groups to identify and define their needs.*
7. *Ensure that research results are widely accessible and used.*
8. *Strive for the highest quality research that is ethically based.*
9. *Actively network researchers and users of research in creative interdisciplinary teams including partnerships with other research providers.*

The recent 'High level University strategic directions for research' add a tenth objective of pursuing commercialisation of research.

CDU is progressing to some extent on most of these objectives. Appropriate priority areas have been selected and high quality research leaders appointed. The major mechanism in the research area is the Institute of Advanced Studies and so the way it operates within CDU will be critical to CDU's research success. Only one of the nine objectives relates to research students, and that in a numeric sense, but the Audit Panel also investigated the supervision of and support for research students.

4.1 *The Research Structure*

4.1.1 Research Management

The research management framework includes the Research Panel of AB, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Research Office, the ethics committees, the school research champions, and the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS). The Research Office is responsible for the administration and oversight of CDU's research activities. The allocation of RTS funds is included in a global budget for each school in the faculties, and the Research Office is responsible for tracking RTS expenditure so that it is efficient, effective and consistent with the agreed research priorities.

In 2004, CDU did a self-analysis by comparing itself with good practices in research generated by the Association of Commonwealth Universities International Research Management Benchmarking project. The self-assessment was modest, and indicated lines of improvement.

Work with external partners is a feature, although the population size of the Northern Territory (200,000) is a limiting factor. For further growth, CDU is looking to build further strategic partnerships (in teaching as well as research).

CDU has been successful in attracting some leading researchers, which has enhanced the University's image. More work is needed to implement a systematic early career researcher support system and to develop a cohort of Indigenous mainstream researchers.

4.1.2 Research Income

CDU places heavy emphasis on gaining external research funding, and its research income compares well for its size among the group of New Generation Universities. The Research Office provides significant assistance in the grant application process. The amount of research is increasing rapidly, but research-active staff contributing to this increase are feeling the strain of the high research and high teaching loads.

In 2003, the overall rate of publications/FTE academic staff in the Australian HE sector was reported to be 2.43+ 0.71, compared to 1.72 for CDU. For research income/FTE, however, CDU's figure of \$83,211 is 21% above the sector mean. The University believes that the high income/FTE and low publications/FTE reflects the tendency for staff at CDU to produce reports for users rather than focus on standard research publications. This behaviour is consistent with CDU's focus on community benefit.

The Research Office appears to be working well and providing good leadership for the research effort.

4.1.3 Ethics

The three CDU ethics committees appear to work well. The process is rigorous and well-handled and serves the research effort well.

The Indigenous Research Ethics Committee of the Menzies School of Health Research has the power of veto over Indigenous research projects. This is an appropriate approach for CDU in its aim to be sensitive to the culture of its environment.

4.2 *Research Priority Areas*

"The research priorities at CDU have been identified by matching the strengths of the University, measured by publications, grants and postgraduate student completions, with the priorities of interest groups in the region gleaned from publications, reports and interviews" (PF p42). This shows commendable awareness of and responsiveness to the community in which the University is located. The identified research priorities are:

- Natural and cultural resource management
- Human health and well-being
- Teaching, learning and living
- Community, development, and identity

Actions to implement these priorities include allocating resources and scholarships almost solely to activities that are consistent with the priorities; and giving precedence to these areas when recruiting new staff.

CDU reports that "there are a few internationally renowned researchers at CDU whose work does not fall within these priorities" (PF p42) and the Audit Panel investigated the situation of those whose work is outside the priority areas. In general, it appears that high-performing staff are still

supported even outside these areas. Perhaps more clarity is needed about the general research-related expectations of other staff.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends CDU's approach to identifying its research priority areas, and the subsequent targeted recruitment of senior staff to these areas to provide strong research leadership.

The differential recruitment will mean that these areas within CDU get stronger over time, but it may also be that these topics diminish in significance for the community. CDU should therefore provide for reviewing its prioritisation to allow phasing out and the introduction of new ones. Any re-prioritising should not take place on a short time scale (less than a five-year cycle), as rapid change of such significant indicators and motivators is counter-productive.

Relatively rapid staff turnover is a feature of the NT, but CDU is exacerbating this by offering short-term appointments. The Panel recognises the need and desire to maintain flexibility, especially at this early stage of the University when rapid change can be expected. However, three-year appointments in the research area are creating problems of continuity, maintenance of research grants, and especially for the supervision of research higher degree students, where the contract period is insufficient even for a timely completion.

Within the priority areas, CDU is aiming to develop centres of excellence for tropical knowledge, desert knowledge and Indigenous knowledge. The Panel could see evidence of factors in place relating to the first two of these, but not to the third. Issues that could be addressed include the need for: a program for developing Indigenous researchers; recognising more field workers as researchers; building on the CDU/NTU Government partnership; and the resolution of issues relating to the ownership of Indigenous knowledge.

It is always difficult for under-represented groups to achieve parity of representation, but CDU should ensure (as far as possible) that there is an Indigenous researcher on all Indigenous research projects. This will help to address the issue of ownership of knowledge.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that, in order to achieve its objective of creating a centre of excellence for Indigenous knowledge, CDU reassess and redefine the role of the Dean, Indigenous Research and Education, make additional appropriate senior research appointments and devise a program for the development of Indigenous researchers, possibly including targeted funding, and including recognition and training of field workers where appropriate.

4.3 *Institute of Advanced Studies*

“The relatively small size of the University has permitted the development of only a few significant clusters of researchers, namely in environmental science, education, health, and history and politics, all in the Faculties until 2004” (PF p45). To overcome some of this problem of scale, CDU has created an Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS). This Institute and has a collaborative relationship with the IAS at the Australian National University.

The Institute of Advanced Studies has three research schools:

- School of Environmental Research (SER)
- Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR)
- School of Social and Policy Research (SSPR)

While not restricted in the work they can carry out, these three schools are clearly related to priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively.

As an example of early success of the IAS in achieving research growth, the staff complement in SSPR went from three in 2004 to 33 in 2005 with the acquisition of grants and the appointment of research staff supported by those grants.

MSHR is a controlled entity of the University, with its own Board. SER and SSPR have advisory committees, which together form the IAS Advisory Committee “with a link to the Board of MSHR through the Director of the IAS” (PF p45). It is not obvious that there is any reason – other than historical – to maintain this differential and asymmetric structure. On the contrary, it detracts from the collaborative attitude that is essential if a small university is to prosper. CDU could usefully work towards a greater integration of MSHR into the ‘mainstream’ of the University.

CDU identified tensions between faculties and the IAS and attributes it “largely” to “misunderstandings of resource flows” (PF p45). The Audit Panel confirms the assessment that there is a significant tension – and that staff in the IAS are sensitive to this – but finds the reason to be more basic, namely the place of research in the University. The creation of the IAS as a research focus has left some staff in the faculties unsure of their research role in the system. Some staff in faculties who want to maintain a research career believe that the IAS will be the locus of research in CDU and hence that establishing a link with IAS is their lifeline for survival. In fact, CDU says that “collaboration between Schools of the IAS and the Faculties is being encouraged” (PF p45). While this is resulting in research efforts that cut across the ‘silos’ in one dimension, CDU needs to decide whether it is happy with such a ‘hub and spokes’ model or whether it wishes to encourage a more generally collaborative model. Also, the obverse of the desire of some staff in the faculties to be linked with IAS is the concern of some staff in the IAS that their research effort and concentration will be diluted.

Recommendation 8

AUQA notes CDU’s recognition of tensions between the faculties and the IAS and recommends that these tensions be addressed by senior management, before they become embedded.

Since CDU has decided to establish such an Institute, it should capitalise on the Institute as much as possible and publicise ways in which it provides a research resource and leadership for the NT. Referring again to the previous section and leadership in Indigenous research, CDU needs to think carefully not only about the quantum of support but also about the nature of the structures, and whether they are conducive to Indigenous knowledge and learning.

One of CDU’s teaching and learning objectives (see section 3) is “To have University research activities inform and support University teaching and learning activities, particularly in relation to postgraduate coursework offerings”. If research is strongly located in the IAS because its funding sources anticipate research output, its staff cannot be expected to do much teaching, and therefore teaching is essentially limited to being located in the faculties, the way in which the teaching/research connection is made needs some thought.

4.4 Research Champions

The role of research champion shares the same general problems of the champion task (section 1.6), though perhaps to a lesser degree because many academics still think of themselves as researchers first. The Panel noted that “the roles of the Research Champions were modified during 2004 as experience was gained to inform what is feasible and desirable. The roles are now focussed on: being aware of research in their School, aiding information flow, research

development, peer review of grants applications, mentoring, and being a point of contact for potential funding bodies” (PF p51). The champions each made a brief report on their activities during 2004, and these reports were shared with the rest of the group. The Panel noted from these reports that some champions were very active. On the other hand, some staff find that their research champion has little idea of their role and no ability to assist in research matters. The reports differed greatly in level of detail. While it might be better to achieve slightly greater consistency, the variety is probably useful in triggering new ideas.

One faculty reports that it has an associate dean of research to smooth the link between the schools and the central areas. CDU might reflect on whether having an associate dean of research and one of teaching in each faculty might be better than having a champion for each function in each school. There would be a need for only six people to fill these positions instead of 22, so there would be a greater chance of finding people able to do the respective tasks, they would have greater authority and they could be better supported.

4.5 *Research Training*

4.5.1 Supervision

Higher degree student numbers at CDU are modest, with 132 EFTSL enrolments in coursework and research doctorates, 207 EFTSL in graduate certificates and diplomas, and 138 EFTSL in master by coursework and research. To increase these numbers, CDU plans to augment the current school-level informal recruitment to a more focused marketing of research opportunities, concurrently with building capacity for high quality supervision.

In relation to supervision, CDU has some mechanisms in place, and has recognised that these need to be strengthened and formalised. CDU has a Register of Supervisors, but the criteria for admission to it should be strengthened. CDU has training opportunities for supervisors, but attendance has been optional.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms CDU’s recognition of the need for explicit criteria for admission to the register of supervisors, and rules about removal therefrom.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that CDU implement mandatory training for the supervisors of research higher degree students.

There are guidelines on research supervision and a code of conduct for supervisors. Supervision Agreements are required by the Research Panel, and these are reviewed at least annually. Students report satisfaction with their supervisors, with the major concern being lack of continuity. The transience of the NT population means that students quite often experience the departure of their supervisor. The result can be a supervisor operating on the fringe of their area of expertise.

To address both this problem of continuity and to enhance the scope and strength of the direct supervisory support for students more generally, CDU is now using supervisory panels rather than sole supervisors. This system also serves an apprenticeship purpose for newer researchers. Responses to the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire are at 4+ on a 1-5 scale (though the sample size is small).

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms CDU's current move towards greater use of supervisory panels instead of sole supervisors for research higher degree students.

4.5.2 Support

Schools are required to provide an induction program for incoming higher degree by research (HDR) students, but students report varying experiences of this. At the beginning of the year, there is a Postgraduate Week, which is not found to be particularly helpful, and (probably in consequence) attendance is low. CDU is reviewing the Postgraduate Week. A question about the student's experience of the adequacy of induction could be added to the annual student report.

HDR students receive \$1000 per year for materials and \$1000 for travel, but otherwise students have some concern with the facilities in respect of space and IT support. With the small number of HDR students, there is a high likelihood of students being isolated, and CDU's intention to create a postgraduate centre is a useful response.

Students are generally not aware of the Student Academic Grievance, Review and Appeals Process which is in place in place to use when problems arise that cannot feasibly be raised with the supervisor (or when the supervisor is the problem). There is no postgraduate on Academic Board now; the former associate deans for research were a contact point for postgraduate students, but now the research champions (school level) do not seem the right channel, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research (University level) would be too busy for this role. Perhaps with the postgraduate centre there is a need for a role like dean of graduate students.

There is a postgraduate students association which advocates for students, such as arguing for more study space.

5 COMMUNITY AND ACCESS

According to the Strategic Plan, published in 2005, CDU's Primary Objective in this area is:

To manage and expand interaction with the various communities and groups to maximise the value of the institution to the region.

The associated Enabling Objectives are:

1. *Engage with its community in a manner that is purposeful and planned which leads to serendipitous interaction.*
2. *Engage with Indigenous communities to ensure Indigenous perspectives guide the design, access, delivery and evaluation of programs.*
3. *Build and maintain a strong relationship with all Northern Territory secondary schools.*
4. *Provide customised access to its programs and services for target equity groups.*
5. *Recognise and be appropriate to the different professional jurisdictions within the community.*
6. *Establish and widely publicise articulated pathways into and through both VET and Higher Education.*
7. *Support community events that contribute to building both social and relationship capital.*
8. *Support targeted regional initiatives.*
9. *Understand and strive to meet the tertiary education and research needs of all cultures within its community.*

CDU is very conscious of and supportive of its community. CDU is trying to develop within the University a sense of place, of belonging to NT, though as mentioned in chapter 1 it has work to do to be perceived as accessible and engaged. Work with secondary schools is proceeding, equity groups are being targeted, professional links are active through the course advisory panels, pathways are being developed and there is a tangible commitment to remote communities.

5.1 *The Community and Access Portfolio*

Given CDU's location (the sole university in a large sparsely-populated territory) and character (an integrated dual-sector institution), it is appropriate that this portfolio area should feature strongly in the University's activities. The portfolio is led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community and Access) (PVC(C&A)) and is organised into four areas, namely Indigenous, Community Engagement, Articulated Pathways, and Regional and Remote.

The C&A section of the Performance Portfolio contains only very brief descriptions of the last three areas. Consistent with this, the Panel found little strategic development, with most of the work dependent on individual staff. It is also largely ad hoc, which is more typical in an institution where the community link is less central. The lack of a systematic approach leads to a lack of co-ordination, staff do not know what each is doing, and the same community can have independent and unrelated contact with different people from CDU. This is not good for resource usage nor for the University's image.

The Panel also noticed the use of different language in different parts of the Performance Portfolio (eg 'community engagement', 'community and access') but not with a purposefully different meaning. At present, this appears to be a very under-developed aspect of CDU's aspirations.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that CDU adopt a more strategic approach to community engagement, with a coherent plan for activities, but permitting flexible arrangements within it.

Such an approach would require a University-wide register or database of activities and community interactions.

CDU belongs to the Australian Universities Community Engagement Association (AUCEA), formed a few years ago at the University of Western Sydney. An active role in this Association, and its identification with the New Generation Universities, may help CDU to develop this area of its activities, and strengthen its community links both ways.

5.2 Indigenous Initiatives

5.2.1 Structures

The original plan for restructuring NTU into CDU proposed four faculties, including an Indigenous one. Subsequently, it was decided that this could seem to absolve the rest of the University from paying attention to the needs and contributions of Indigenous students and staff. It was decided that the best way of ensuring attention to Indigenous matters would be to embed them in all schools and units of the University, with a leader of the area with University-wide responsibility. Neither of these options is 'the right one' – both integration and specialisation are tried from time to time in many contexts. The important thing is to make the chosen option work, by putting in place the appropriate structures and people.

At present, insufficient advantage is taken of the leader in this area, namely the Dean of Indigenous Research and Education (IRE). This position should be spending a large proportion of time on strategic issues, and have management responsibility in relevant areas, such as managing the funding for Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme and Indigenous Support Unit (section 5.2.2). The position needs to be better supported for CDU to achieve its stated objectives (see Recommendation 8, section 4.2).

There are currently around 230 HE Indigenous HE students (headcount) and 46 Indigenous staff. This is an admirable achievement, but there needs to be a more fully expressed plan for increasing the participation of Indigenous students and staff (but see the introductory paragraph of Chapter 1).

As part of this reassessment, CDU should consider making the Dean IRE position a part of the senior executive, to maximise the effectiveness of this position.

CDU has also established an Indigenous Think Tank and an Indigenous Reference Group. The former consists of land council leaders and high-profile academics and acts as a sounding board for the VC, giving strategic guidance to the University. The latter is convened by the PVC(C&A) and consists of seven members of the Indigenous community, with the Dean IRE as an ex officio member. Its role will be more tactical, providing guidance on Indigenous issues, monitoring CDU's Indigenous outcomes, and advising on the implementation of ideas from the Think Tank. It met for the first time on 22 June 2005.

The Performance Portfolio states that the recent planning in C&A is rather short-term and oriented towards problem-solving (PF p61). Work is needed, led by the PVC(C&A) and the Dean IRE, to translate the objectives listed above into outcome targets.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends CDU's recognition of its vital role in Indigenous development and its commitment to valuing Indigenous people.

5.2.2 Internal Activities

Indigenous Support Unit

With the decision not to have a separate faculty of Indigenous studies but a school (School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, SAIKS), the staff clearly identifiable with 'an Indigenous entity' fell sharply, which left some Indigenous students feeling they have 'no port of call'. Although above national sector averages, the participation and success rates of Indigenous students are significantly lower than the other equity target groups and this must be of concern to a university that has such a significant proportion of Indigenous people in its client population. The participation rate has been unchanged over the last three years. This indicates that CDU will have to increase its recruitment programs (such as the Indigenous Taste of Uni) and develop other initiatives to encourage able Indigenous students to complete their schooling and aspire to undertake university studies. A greater emphasis on articulation from VET to HE would also help Indigenous students.

To address these needs, CDU has this year developed the Indigenous Support Unit (ISU) which consists of support people in each school (at present there are eight of them) under a central ISU co-ordinator. As a group, the ISU has offered a three-day orientation program and is working with individual schools on making courses more accessible to Indigenous students or Indigenousising courses.

The University also administers the DEST Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS), with its attendant bureaucratic requirements (which are quite daunting – especially for those students who need it).

Indigenous cadetships

Up to two Indigenous cadetships for HE students worth up to \$60,000 each for a four-year program were introduced in 2005. These offer mentoring and paid University employment during major semester breaks. Successful completion of the degree will position the cadet to gain graduate employment in one of the diverse areas of CDU management. The concept is a useful one, provided the targeted employment options are not too narrow. There is currently one cadet.

Cross-cultural awareness

Cross-cultural awareness training has been developed for staff. Senior staff of SAIKS provide the training to HoSs and other senior managers in a one-day session. This program is also being provided to the NT Justice Department, and CDU is contracting to do it in Canberra. However, this is an increasing load on SAIKS, and more personnel resource is needed.

Commendation 8

AUQA commends CDU's establishment of the Indigenous Support Unit, the Indigenous cadetships, and the cross-cultural awareness training program.

5.2.3 External Activities

High Schools

The 'Indigenous Taste of Uni' program identifies local Indigenous Year 12 students with potential for HE and brings them onto campus for an experience of University. Of about 40 students in the first group of visitors, over half subsequently enrolled in HE courses. Groups of

Indigenous Year 10 and Year 12 students are brought onto campus – 120 and 60 last year to the Casuarina and Alice Springs campuses respectively. This is seen as a long-term commitment, aiming to have students visit in both Year 10 and Year 12. Making contact at Year 10 permits pointing them towards VET as well as HE.

BIITE

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) is a self-accrediting institution, located only 100km south of Darwin, and educating Indigenous students. Like CDU, BIITE has many outstation activities. It is natural that the two should co-operate, to avoid duplication and strengthen the total educational provision for Indigenous students. Last year, the Federal government provided funds for activities associated with establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two institutions, and this is now in place. The general text of the MoU is being underpinned by the production of many agreements on points of detail, eg sharing capital infrastructure at remote sites.

This MoU is a very useful step in the development of provision for Indigenous students in the NT, even though a great deal more needs to be done to develop agreements at the local level.

5.3 *Community Engagement*

The ‘Function Profile for Community Engagement’ is a very general statement of principles for community engagement, rather than a plan or strategy for CDU’s community engagement. The Partnership with NT Government is clearly one valuable undertaking in this area of activity. Also the Charles Darwin Symposium Series and other public lectures provide a good vehicle for this area. The secondary school liaison activities are also a positive community engagement. CDU also hosts a children’s music program and a guitar festival as part of its community engagement that also brings the community on campus.

Otherwise, as stated in section 5.1, this is an area where the thinking is in need of further development.

5.4 *Articulated Pathways*

As with Community Engagement, the ‘Function Profile for Articulated Pathways’ is a very general statement of principles. As part of this area of the C&A portfolio, CDU is actively reaching out to high schools, with the aim of having a Memorandum of Cooperation with each of the 20 urban secondary schools and possibly with another 20 remote Indigenous community schools. The agreements will include information-sharing, VET in schools, pathways, and visits. The first agreements were expected by the end of August 2005.

Secondary school liaison positions have been created at both Casuarina and Alice Springs and the newly appointed Secondary Liaison Officers are currently developing active links with schools, though the Officers do not have a large dedicated travel budget (eg for travelling to visit a school where potential has been established vis distant communication).

Commendation 9

AUQA commends CDU’s secondary school liaison programs.

CDU also aims to have secondary schools on the Palmerston and Alice Springs campuses, and to be a joint partner in the new NT Australian Technical College.

Otherwise, this portfolio area is about establishing and publishing flexible entry and exit points and mechanisms. This task is at an early stage of development (but see Alternative Exit Awards, section 3.2.2).

5.5 *Regional and Remote Activities*

There is a Director, Regional and Remote and a good deal of excellent activity occurring with remote communities. CDU is making a real effort to prepare students for remote regions. However, there is a fragmentation of remote activities across the CDU schools. A lack of co-ordination means that people active in remote communities are not aware of each others' activities. The relevant funding comes by staff member, through schools, so the same community can be serviced independently by several different schools without co-ordination. It would be worth CDU further reflecting on arrangements for the coordination of its regional and remote activities, as the practical details of what is involved in visiting, supporting, and encouraging people in remote communities need to be fully embraced. There is a role for the community and access champions here.

Commendation 10

AUQA commends CDU staff commitment to community and personal development in remote areas.

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that CDU ensure that staff operating into remote areas are adequately supported, and that their activities are well co-ordinated.

6 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

According to the Strategic Plan, published in 2005, CDU's Primary Objective in this area is:

To expand the proportion of income from profitable (non-traditional) business coming from government and non-government sources in a managed and diversified way.

The associated Enabling Objectives are:

1. *To expand the value of consulting and contract research activities in the University.*
2. *To expand the value of fee-paying, contract and offshore delivery of educational programs.*
3. *To increase onshore international student numbers to be 20% of the higher education student population by 2010.*
4. *To develop a wide range of short and other fee-paying course options, sought after by the market.*
5. *To develop and exploit a portfolio of University intellectual property.*

The designation of business development as a core business area was a recognition of the need for CDU actively to pursue profits in order to support its other activities (PF p5). CDU is at a very early stage of giving substance to this area, with the Executive Director (Business Development) appointed in September 2004.

6.1 The Business Development Portfolio

6.1.1 Understanding Business Development

Like C&A, this area needs better definition. The above objectives are so broad as to include all aspects of university work that can be turned towards the derivation of a profit. While it is beneficial to be inclusive, the current total openness is resulting in some confusion. The uncertainty about what constitutes Business Development (BD), and what individuals should do about it, is reinforced by the development of the BD marketing plan without input from schools. Some staff include under this heading further development of their core business, or confuse BD with outreach. On the other hand, others have seized on the opportunity to develop VET pathways and commercialisation activities with industry.

Faculties have BD leaders and schools have BD champions. This seems to be the most difficult champion role to fill, because academics do not necessarily have the requisite skills. Business development skills are not usually a significant criterion in the recruitment of academics. (The Portfolio mentions that it is necessary "to instil a new culture" (PF p59).) Also (like other champions) BD champions have no authority to press staff to consider profitable activities.

Currently, there is little co-ordination between the schools and other areas on BD. Just as with C&A, CDU needs a register of who has been approached, and the Panel noted that a central database is under development. In fact, to the extent that it involves making external contacts, BD overlaps with C&A, and it may be best to create a single database.

Commendation 11

AUQA commends CDU's identification of and commitment to the need for diversification of income sources.

The BD portfolio area is divided into External Relations, the Business Development Unit and the International Office.

6.1.2 External Relations

This area is about fund-raising through donations, not fees for services. It is mainly to do with alumni, but also engages with the business community. The need for liaison with the C&A portfolio is evident. The Business Development Unit provides training in fund-raising for all faculties and schools.

6.1.3 The Business Development Unit

This has the responsibility for raising awareness and understanding of BD in schools, and supporting them in their attempts to carry it out. A possible disincentive for taking up opportunities is that currently none of the funds generated go directly to the individual, but are split 50%, 20%, 30% to the centre, faculty and school respectively (though a HoS may spend funds on activities relevant to individuals). There is also a process by which schools forecast the amount they will earn in the forthcoming budget period and this is built into the budget. It is not clear what happens if returns are lower than forecast.

The nature of the current support from the centre is not universally appreciated. The Panel learned of an opportunity for some significant external funding being rejected by academic staff because of a perception that the necessary CDU processes would be time-consuming. Also, some schools are moving in this direction without reference to the centre as they are not confident that the centre would understand their nature. CDU advises that “new processes have been developed to improve and streamline activities in a number of business areas to provide a consistent and transparent approach throughout the University. When complete, they will be promulgated and compiled into a handbook for staff” (PF p58).

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that CDU clarify the concepts of business development for staff, and provide suitable training, incentives and reward for their attempts to carry it out.

6.2 *International Students*

Including international students in the BD area signals the role and purpose of international students in CDU.

The marketing plan for attracting international students to study in Australia is quite weak, especially in relation to the ambitious target of Objective 3. There is also the possibility of discontinuity with the plan just being drafted as a new international director appointed but yet to start. The plan derives only from current student numbers, and there is little analysis of the feasibility of increasing the intake from the countries listed. Furthermore, the schools were not consulted about the feasibility of the final plan from their perspective, although discussion on enhancing international student recruitment in general occurred through the mechanism of strategic planning discussions. CDU could experience problems if these targets are built in to the budget. The Performance Portfolio states that “a more targeted approach to international marketing is showing results with significant increases in enrolments in 2005”. This is pleasing for the University, but more attention to the plan will be needed to maintain the momentum.

The thinking about the enrolment of students overseas has not yet reached the planning stage, and currently lacks focus. There are no plans for which countries are to be targeted. Instead, the intent seems rather to depend on links made by staff overseas for other purposes.

CDU does not emphasise the 'near Asia' ellipse of CDU's three identified ellipses of interest (PF p2) as an area for international student recruitment. In general, the near Asian ellipse does not feature very highly in documents or discussions, except in respect of Timor Leste, where CDU constantly has some activity under way.

Staff must be appropriately qualified for the expected tasks in this area, and this requires time and resources.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that CDU improve its planning and focus in the area of international student recruitment, with some reference to its own identified 'near Asia' region.

7 CORPORATE SERVICES

According to the Strategic Plan, published in 2005, CDU's Primary Objective in this area is:

To provide continuous improvement in support service delivery in a balanced and managed way, with priorities reflecting primary goals in other core areas of University business

The associated Enabling Objectives are:

1. *Develop an organisational unit and skills profile and suite of supporting infrastructure that addresses the support needs of the University and its clients, as well as requirements of funding and accrediting agencies.*
2. *Develop a set of metrics useful for informing decision-making around issues of quality, efficiency and effectiveness of support service delivery, and use these to inform service improvement.*
3. *Improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of support service delivery on a continuous basis.*

The audit showed that all these objectives are at an early stage of achievement. The Performance Portfolio points to the reason for this, observing that "As a result of the particular circumstances of 2004, most planning and related activities in Corporate Services in that year were of a short-term nature ... Coming to the end of 2004 ... it was appropriate to commence longer-term planning, with greater engagement of the University community." (PF p67)

7.1 Administration

Corporate Services is one of the five core business areas, and has the task of servicing the other areas. It is composed of eight sections, namely Corporate Communications, Finance & Asset Services, Information Technology & Management Services, Library & Information Access, Staff Services, Student Services, Support & Equity Services, and Governance. The Audit Panel spoke to the heads of each of these sections (except the last) and also some other staff from the area.

As mentioned in section 1.2, the new organisation diagram shows Corporate Services as having an underpinning role, symbolic of its service function. This goal has not yet been achieved in practice, and the general impression of staff of administrative support tends towards the negative, although a significant component of the University's overall administrative functions reside outside of Corporate Services in the academic units. It may be that (consistent with the short-term planning mentioned above) the emphasis so far has been on whether the administration works well rather than whether it best serves the academic undertakings of the University. However, there is a strong feeling that inefficiencies and lack of customer focus are losing the University students. The panel heard a number of accounts of lost documents (and enrolment paperwork). Consistent with the new organisation diagram, there has been an attempt to change the administrative culture, but further work is necessary (see also sections 7.2 and 7.3.1).

Affirmation 8

AUQA affirms CDU's intention to strengthen the service culture of the administrative services provided centrally and through academic units.

The Panel formed the view that CDU needs better document control, and in the Performance Portfolio CDU "acknowledges that there are improvements required in its control of a range of important documents" (PF p19). A large, high-level group has been working on this essential work. Good leadership will be vital to achieving an effective outcome.

Section leaders are making good progress on the development of metrics (Objective 2) for their respective areas. Further work will be necessary for them to be useful in the ways outlined in Objective 2.

7.2 *Human Resources*

Staff development was not a high priority in the past, with “human resources (HR) practices focused on administration” (PF p14). For example, in April 2004, there was only one staff member with responsibilities for academic staff development relating to teaching (Report on evaluation). Furthermore, these responsibilities represented only a portion of the duties of this staff member, who left the University in 2004.

Therefore late in 2003, CDU began a comprehensive review of its people development and management practices. This People Development and Management Review was carried out very inclusively, successively using a questionnaire, focus groups and task teams. Work is still proceeding on implementing the recommended processes and systems in six areas: Investment in manager training in people development; annual Performance Development Review for all staff; redesigned processes (including induction, probation, promotion); electronic transactions where possible; comprehensive communications plan; and developing a customer focus by Staff Services. In relation to the last-named, key customers have been identified, regular visits for feedback have been instigated, and heads of school fora are held. It is “too early for customer feedback about improved quality of service” (progress report on the People Development process).

Although the Review was carried out inclusively, some of the many involved now feel unsure about what is happening. Enhanced communication about progress would maintain awareness of and interest in the continuing activities.

In discussion of staff turnover, it appeared to the Panel that concern was felt only over those who resign, and that the normal expiration of a contract is beyond the University’s control. This is clearly not the case, and having short-term contracts could exacerbate the NT problem of staff turnover. Following a series of budget deficits of the former NTU, CDU need to reverse the trend, and so placed restrictions on appointments that have been implemented differently by different areas of the University. This is a difficult area that needs continued attention.

Recommendation 14

AUQA recommends that CDU review the use of short-term contracts, while recognising the need to balance its budget.

The Panel found that despite the high level of staff departure, CDU does not make it easy for staff to get onto the payroll, and does not appear to be paying enough attention to caring for new staff. One faculty (Education, Health and Science) anticipated the need for induction and introduced academic induction for staff in the first half of 2005 (PF p34).

Affirmation 9

AUQA affirms CDU’s implementation of actions recommended in the People Development and Management Review, including induction and annual performance reviews.

Also, performance appraisal that identifies development needs must result in those needs being addressed.

Commendation 12

AUQA commends CDU's attention to the employment of high-quality staff and the good foundation this provides for development and growth.

7.3 *Student Services*

7.3.1 Enrolment

Students and external community members report difficulties with initial enrolment (re-enrolment is generally though not universally better). This had been a problem in NTU where it was carried out by the faculties. A move to central processing in early 2003 exacerbated the problem. Most of the problems brought to the student union relate to enrolment, and Council is also concerned about it. Students report delays even up to several weeks, leading to problems arising from not having a student card. Furthermore, once enrolled, students have to re-create a new profile every semester. Users find the system quite unresponsive. (See recommendation in section 7.1.)

7.3.2 Academic Liaison Units

CDU is aware that students have been given wrong advice on enrolments and allowable course combinations. Some students have lost credit points as a result of this, there is a lack of information on cancelled courses, and course material can arrive very late. Noting that enrolment problems appeared to derive either from poor central processes or from poor quality advice given by course co-ordinators (PF p75), faculty-based academic liaison units were set up in 2004. These may have two or three staff and handle the faculty-level work formerly handled by course co-ordinators.

CDU has recognised that this solution has not worked particularly well, and is working on it. It is likely that a better solution is to better train the course co-ordinators than to try to bypass them with people who are now expected to be expert over an unreasonably large range of courses.

7.3.3 Other Services

The student support systems are all quite new. There appears to be only one skills facilitator, and students are generally unaware of the position. Students are also unaware of the grievance procedures. The student association has a students' rights advocate and passes people onto the Support and Equity Services as necessary.

Alice Springs is relatively well supported, with ITAS support, library support, small classes, and the imminent employment of an equity and support person. More generally, it should be noted that staff are enormously supportive of and accessible to students, and students recognise and appreciate this and are complimentary about staff

There is an active student association. This year the VCMG has introduced a meeting with the student association as an agenda item. Nonetheless, the student association feels that decisions are imposed from the top, with consultation with students only after the decision.

7.4 *Library and IT*

7.4.1 Library

The Library carries out a Client Satisfaction Survey biennially and publishes the results. It also participates in the Rodski surveys. Responses relating to library staff are generally positive, but

responses relating to resources including computers indicate the need for attention. In response to the lack of computers, the ground floor of the Library has been set up as a 'Learning Precinct' with 100 computers, which is planned to be open round the clock. This is most impressive. The layout is conducive to creative use of the space and access is good. The student response has been very positive.

Commendation 13

AUQA commends the development of CDU's Learning Precinct, which is gaining positive feedback from students.

The Library also provides well for people with disabilities, with wheelchair access, attention to the weight of items, etc.

The more general issue of lack of resources still needs attention. Supporting the IAS and the Alice Springs campus have been extra demands, and the Library acquisitions budget has remained unchanged for four years. The Library acknowledges that the research collection is inadequate. This is mitigated slightly by the Menzies School of Health Research making use of the library at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Also the Library is developing partnerships with other libraries and implements an effective inter-library loan service.

7.4.2 Information Technology and Management Services

Most of the IT services are centralised, and most are now provided in-house rather than outsourcing, including server and database administration and a desktop supporting service. Specialist laboratories are the responsibility of the respective school or faculty. ITMS hope to develop service level agreements with the faculties. Standardised central computing laboratories are provided for students, but ITMS has not yet sought any feedback on them.

ITMS is involved in the progressive migration of units to on-line mode and support students by storing learning objects for use over semesters. It is part of ITMS Strategic Plan to raise outside sponsorship for identified needs. In this regard, it took advantage of a donation of wireless technology Learning Tablets from Hewlett-Packard to enhance the wireless provision and to provide a tablet lending service. The current plan is to make the entire library, the computer labs and the central teaching building wireless.

NTU contracted Callista Software Services in 2001. In November 2003, just as CDU began, a Callista Student Management System went live on time and on budget. The implementation appears to be working well, but it is not yet linked with enquiries.

Commendation 14

AUQA commends the collaboration and synergy between CDU's Library and the Information Technology and Management Services.

7.5 Finance System

For some years, NTU and CDU have been working with activity-based costing (ABC). For the 2005 year faculties and non-teaching areas were provided with guidelines which required the compilation of budgets which covered the business needs of the units and which were built from a zero base. Administrative staff in faculties and schools struggled with the need to use ABC and zero-based budgeting on the basis of principles alone. Also, the resultant budgets were reviewed by Finance resulting in agreed levels coming into line with the estimates formerly provided to Council. It is not obvious that this complex process added value, especially as, according to information given to the Panel, national averages are used for formula funding, including the number of staff that will be funded.

Support staff in schools and faculties report errors made by the central system and that the same question can receive different answers in quick succession. Thus, there are problems with obtaining accurate data. External employers using the VET system also report problems with multiple or late billing. This may be a student process problem, rather than a finance problem, and audits show that the situation has improved markedly over recent years.

Recommendation 15

AUQA recommends that CDU review the finance area, providing training as necessary, with a view to providing more effective support to the schools and faculties.

7.6 *Communications*

The media and communication area has the responsibility of enhancing CDU's image by getting 'good news stories' out into the community, as well as ensuring that communication flows to staff within the institution (cf. section 1.7). Nonetheless, VCMG decisions do not filter down clearly, despite communication mechanisms that are in place. There is a need for more communication with staff about what CDU is doing externally and what positive developments are happening internally. Staff have a negative opinion of the reverse 'c' in the 'brand'.

Externally, the CDU / NT Government Partnership means there may be an opportunity to work with the Office of the Chief Minister on communication with the community about CDU and its activities and achievements.

APPENDIX A: CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY

History and Location

Charles Darwin University, Australia's youngest university, was formed in November 2003 from the amalgamation of the Northern Territory University, Centralian College (Alice Springs) and the Northern Territory Rural College (Katherine). At the same time a new Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) focussing on research was established, with the Menzies School of Health Research joining the IAS in January 2004 through a controlled entity arrangement.

CDU is an integrated dual-sector regional institution, providing around 85% of all Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in the Northern Territory. CDU has four main campus locations:

- The main campus, Casuarina, approximately 15km from the Darwin City centre
- The Alice Springs campus, located to the east of the town centre
- The Palmerston campus, located around 20km to the east of Darwin
- The Katherine campus comprising operations in the town centre and 20km to the north

The University also maintains a permanent staff presence at other sites including Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Tennant Creek and Adelaide largely providing vocational training along with servicing around 50 regional and remote communities around the Northern Territory with VET programs on a "drive-in, drive-out" basis.

The University identifies five core business areas:

- Teaching & Learning
- Research
- Community & Access
- Business Development
- Corporate Services

Academic Profile

CDU has three academic faculties

- The Faculty of Education, Health and Science comprising 4 Schools:
 - Education
 - Health Sciences
 - Science & Primary Industries
 - Centre for Access & English as a Second Language
- The Faculty of Law, Business & Arts comprising 4 Schools:
 - Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems
 - Creative Arts & Humanities
 - Law & Business
 - Tourism & Hospitality
- The Faculty of Technology comprising 3 Schools:
 - Engineering & Logistics
 - Information Technology
 - Trades

and the Institute of Advanced Studies comprising 3 Schools:

- Environmental Research
- Social and Policy Research
- Menzies School of Health Research

In total CDU offers some 115 HE and 254 VET programs to commencing students.

The University identifies four areas of research strength:

- Natural and Cultural Resource Management
- Human Health and Well-Being
- Teaching, Learning and Living
- Community, Identity & Development

Key Statistics 2004

Total Student Enrolments HE + (VET):		4995 + (13681)
Research Student Enrolments HE:		217
International Student Enrolments HE + (VET):		235 + (79)
Total Student Teaching Load HE (EFTSL):		2993
Total Staff FTE (not including casual staff):	Academic: HE + (VET)	225 + (248)
	General:	476
	Total (inc VET):	949
Total Operating Revenues parent entity (inc VET):		\$133.075m
Total Operating Expenses parent entity (inc VET):		\$117.455m

APPENDIX B: AUQA'S MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

Mission:

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

Objectives:

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

Values:

AUQA will be:

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Emeritus Professor Colin Bourke, Professorial Fellow, Monash University, Victoria

Emeritus Professor Gus Guthrie, Consultant, Queensland (Panel Chair)

Mr Rau Kirikiri, Treaty Responsibilities Manager, Landcare Research, New Zealand

Professor Barbara van Ernst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching), Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria

Dr David Woodhouse, Executive Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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

AB	Academic Board
ABC.....	activity based costing
ADRI	Approach – Deployment – Results – Improvement
A&RC.....	Audit & Risk Committee
AUCEA	Australian Universities Community Engagement Association
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AVCC.....	Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee
BD	Business Development
C&A	Community and Access
CDU	Charles Darwin University
DEST.....	(Australian) Department of Education, Employment and Training
EFTSL	equivalent full-time student load
FTE.....	full-time equivalent
HDR	higher degree research
HE.....	higher education
HoS.....	heads of school
IAS	Institute of Advanced Studies
IRE	Indigenous Research and Education
IT	information technology
ITAS	Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ITMS	Information Technology and Management Services
MCEETYA.....	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
National Protocols	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes
NT.....	Northern Territory
NTU.....	Northern Territory University
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
PVC(C&A).....	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community and Access)
PVC(T&L)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning
RTS.....	Research Training Scheme
SAIKS	School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems
TLP.....	Teaching and Learning Panel
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VCMG.....	Vice-Chancellor’s Management Group
VET	vocational education and training

