

# AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of  
Curtin University of Technology

January 2009

AUQA Audit Report Number 67

ISBN 978 1 877090 98 1

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*The Australian Universities Quality Agency receives funding from the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments of Australia.*

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## CONTENTS

<b>1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Audit Findings .....	1
1.1.1 Key Points .....	1
1.1.2 Outcome Measures .....	1
1.1.3 Matters from Cycle 1 Audit .....	2
1.1.4 Theme 1: Student Experience .....	2
1.1.5 Theme 2: Internationalisation .....	3
1.2 National Protocols and Other External Reference Points.....	3
1.3 Strategic Context.....	4
1.4 Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations.....	5
Commendations.....	5
Affirmations .....	6
Recommendations .....	6
<b>2 MATTERS FROM AUDIT CYCLE 1 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Recommendations 3, 7, 8 .....	7
2.2 Recommendations 10–11 .....	9
2.3 Recommendation 16.....	10
2.4 Changes at Curtin and Improvements to Internal Quality Assurance .....	10
2.4.1 Organisational and Cultural Changes .....	10
2.4.2 Risk Management.....	11
2.4.3 Improvements to Internal Quality Assurance .....	12
<b>3 THEME: STUDENT EXPERIENCE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Selection of Theme .....	13
3.2 Strategic Relevance of the Student Experience .....	13
3.3 Quality of Teaching and Learning .....	14
3.3.1 Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction Survey and eVALUate.....	14
3.3.2 Curriculum 2010 Project.....	15
3.3.3 Academic Standards Framework.....	16
3.3.4 Excellent Teaching that Facilitates Learning .....	17
3.4 Preparation for Workplace Entry.....	18
3.5 Teaching Spaces and Facilities (Physical and Virtual) .....	19
3.6 Student Amenities and Facilities.....	20
3.7 Entry Standards, Orientation and Transition .....	20
3.8 Student Support.....	22
3.9 The Student Population .....	22
3.10 Kalgoorlie and the Regional Centres.....	23
3.11 Academic Integrity including Plagiarism .....	25

<b>4</b>	<b>THEME: INTERNATIONALISATION .....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1	Internationalisation at Curtin .....	27
4.1.1	Internationalisation of the Curriculum .....	28
4.1.2	Internationalisation of Staff.....	28
4.1.3	Student Mobility .....	28
4.2	International Students .....	29
4.2.1	Recruitment .....	29
4.2.2	Entry Standards, Articulation and Recognition of Prior Learning.....	29
4.2.3	International Student Performance.....	30
4.2.4	The International Onshore Student Experience .....	30
4.3	Transnational Education .....	30
4.3.1	Transnational Education Quality Assurance .....	31
4.3.2	Transnational Education Partnerships Visited by the Panel Delegation .....	32
4.3.3	Student Satisfaction.....	35
4.4	Collaborative Campuses.....	35
4.4.1	Curtin Sarawak.....	35
4.4.2	Curtin Sydney.....	37
4.5	International Linkages, International Research Partnerships, Consultancies and Training Programs .....	39
<b>5</b>	<b>DATA .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Item 5.1	Curtin student numbers .....	41
Item 5.2	Curtin outcomes 2008 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund adjusted percentages: (performance against ATN cohort in brackets).....	42
Item 5.3	Curtin Overall Satisfaction percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06 .....	42
Item 5.4	Curtin Overall Satisfaction 2006 by broad field of education .....	43
Item 5.5	Curtin Good Teaching Scale percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06 .....	43
Item 5.6	Curtin Generic Skill Scale percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06 .....	44
Item 5.7	Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction survey results – course experience 2004–06 .....	45
Item 5.8	Curtin eVALUate results – Semester 2, 2005 to Semester 2, 2007 .....	45
Item 5.9	Curtin progress rates by category, compared with the sector and cohort 2002–06.....	46
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>47</b>	
APPENDIX A:	THE AUDIT PROCESS .....	47
APPENDIX B:	AUQA’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VISION AND VALUES.....	49
APPENDIX C:	THE AUDIT PANEL .....	51
APPENDIX D:	ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS.....	52

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 *Audit Findings*

The scope for the 2008 audit of the Curtin University of Technology (Curtin) is the two themes of the 'Ensuring the Quality of the Student Experience' and 'Internationalisation', together with the follow-up of selected recommendations from the 2002 AUQA audit. In addition the Report includes comments on the University's compliance with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*, other external reference points and on academic standards.

AUQA's findings are contained in sections 2 to 4. Data that support the findings are provided in section 5. Information on the conduct of the audit is at Appendix A.

#### 1.1.1 Key Points

Curtin University of Technology is a member of the Australian Technology Network. In 2008, it was the fifth largest university in Australia, and is the third largest provider of transnational education of the Australian universities.

A strategic objective for Curtin is its student-centred approach to enhance the student experience. The development and implementation of a student survey, eVALUate, is having a significant impact on the quality of the student experience, as is the Curriculum 2010 project which is focused on curriculum renewal. An area that requires greater attention is strengthening the identification of academic risks within the University risk management framework. To provide consistently high quality teaching and learning for all students at all locations and in all modes, Curtin will need to assess its long term staffing needs and ensure that future planning and budget allocations sustain this strategic objective.

Curtin has a well developed internationalisation strategy with accompanying policies and procedures to regulate its transnational activities. It has systems in place to manage and monitor its offshore partnerships. The University must further strengthen its management and monitoring of transnational education risks, including monitoring the approval of all transnational education courses offered by the University. This includes ongoing monitoring of the academic performance of students at the Curtin Sydney Campus.

#### 1.1.2 Outcome Measures

On comparative performance indicators for Australian universities, Curtin is recognised for its good performance in access and participation rates, and success and retention of Indigenous students. Curtin rates higher than the sector mean for graduate full-time work, as measured by the Graduate Destination Survey.

In 2007, Curtin received three Carrick Awards for teaching excellence and programs which enhance learning.

The University's research funding increased in 2007. In particular, the University lifted its position in Research Training Scheme Funding to 13th (up from 15th in 2006), with \$12.9 million; placed 20th for Research Infrastructure Block Grants (up from 21st in 2006), with \$2.1

million; and positioned 11th in the Institutional Grant Scheme (up from 13th in 2006), with \$6.2 million in funding. In 2008, Curtin received its first Federation Fellowship.

### 1.1.3 Matters from Cycle 1 Audit

The Audit Panel reviewed the recommendations from the 2002 AUQA Audit Report and investigated a selection of these. The University has simplified policies and processes and, through a relatively recent restructuring of senior management, has achieved greater clarity of roles and responsibilities at a range of University levels and enabled a greater integration of activities across the University. University plans have been streamlined with established objectives, targets and performance indicators and improved reporting and accountability including to Academic Board.

In addressing recommendations in the human resources area, Curtin has put in place a Work Planning and Performance Review Policy, which mandates regular performance reviews and individual staff member's annual work plans aligned to the University's strategic directions. Leadership training and mentoring for senior managers is provided through a recently established Organisational Development Unit. Broader leadership training, to further strengthen middle and senior management is to be provided by this Unit. The recommendations have been addressed.

The University received a recommendation to establish a mandatory higher degree by research (HDR) supervisor register, using clearer criteria for registration. The Panel is of the opinion, that in the context of an increasing HDR student cohort since the last audit, Curtin has taken too long to address the substance of the recommendation. Compliance with supervisor registration is set for June 2009.

### 1.1.4 Theme 1: Student Experience

Curtin defines the student experience from recruitment to graduation. There are a number of positive initiatives underway to enhance the student experience. The University is commended for the development of a student survey, eVALUate, to enhance student learning. Evidence was provided to show that while the system is still developing, useful feedback is being collected and systems are in place to channel this into improving the quality of teaching and learning. The University also uses an annual student satisfaction survey to measure satisfaction with University services and student support.

The University is in the process of implementing a curriculum renewal project (C2010). By 2010 the University will have implemented a comprehensive course review process and embedded the triple-i model into all of its courses. The project and particularly the triple-i model addresses the Curtin graduate attributes and their alignment with professional competencies. The triple-i model addresses alignment with industry, international (including intercultural and indigenous) perspectives and interdisciplinarity.

The Panel congratulates Curtin for having made identifiable progress in its internationalisation of the curriculum.

Curtin has made progress in the development of a consolidated academic standards framework. It is in the process of ensuring awareness and compliance with the framework across the University.

Given the scope and spread of University activities in teaching and its growth trajectory of research, the University will need to consider carefully its staff resourcing needs at all locations. The University will also need to consider the ways in which it meets the challenge of offering students the opportunity to gain practical experience at all locations, including developing their professional skills.

#### 1.1.5 Theme 2: Internationalisation

The University has a well developed internationalisation strategy and significant experience in transnational education. There are a number of sound policies and processes in place to regulate its transnational education partnerships and collaborative campuses. The experience and expertise which resides in the Curtin Business School International (CBSi) has brought about significant improvements. Nevertheless, the University has had to deal with lapses in University approval protocols and has had to tighten up the quality management processes to safeguard students and the reputation of the University from issues that have arisen and can arise in offering programs internationally.

Areas which require attention in transnational education include the timely return of student assessment. The University should also check that there is clarity of which elective units are available per site, and ensuring that electives are actually offered. Curtin also needs to address the academic performance of diploma and bachelor students at the Curtin Sydney Campus, which is below the University student average.

Curtin is commended for the conceptualisation, establishment and successful development of the Curtin Sarawak Campus. This Campus has the potential to be a long-term asset for the University and for the University's reputation in the region. Curtin has been modestly successful in increasing its internationalisation of research, and developing the research record at Curtin Sarawak.

While Curtin makes use of robust contracts to manage partnerships and collaborative campuses, it is important for the University to ensure that the annual reviews of transnational education partnership arrangements are thorough and comprehensively address related risk assessment aspects.

### 1.2 ***National Protocols and Other External Reference Points***

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes require all universities to meet a range of criteria, in particular nationally prescribed criteria A1 to A10 and D1 to D5. At AUQA's request, the University provided a self-assessment against the Protocols, although this submission was not a requirement in the arrangements for the 2008 audits.

On the evidence presented in the Portfolio, the Curtin University of Technology satisfies the criteria in the National Protocols.

Curtin has also made use of a number of other external reference points to ensure the compliance and quality of its provision, including the:

- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- AVCC (now Universities Australia) 2005, *Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities*
- AVCC (now Universities Australia) 2006, *AVCC Guidelines Relating to Students with a Disability*
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cwlth) (ESOS Act) and the National Code.

- *Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cwlth)*
- *MCEETYA's 2005 Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation from VET to Higher Education.*

The audit did not identify any matters of concern regarding the University's compliance with selected external reference points.

### **1.3 Strategic Context**

The mission of Curtin University of Technology, as presented in the Portfolio, is that:

*Curtin is committed to innovation and excellence in teaching and research, for the benefit of our students and the wider community.*

Curtin is a member of the Australian Technology Network (ATN), a coalition of five former institutes of technology in five states which share a history of collaboration with industry and business.

Since becoming a university in 1987, Curtin has sought to be recognised for its education and research. Curtin continued to grow its research activity in 2007, following a 31 per cent increase of external research income in 2006. The University emphasises its international, cross-cultural and Indigenous perspectives, in the context of a commitment to innovation and excellence, with the aim of responding effectively to the needs of students and the wider region.

The Curtin community comprises six major campuses. Curtin's principal campus is located at Bentley, six kilometres from the CBD of Perth. Curtin also has two other metropolitan campuses; regional campuses/centres in Kalgoorlie, Northam, Geraldton and Margaret River; and six other Western Australian education centres. There are two collaborative campuses at Miri, Sarawak and in Sydney, and a collaborative college on the Bentley Campus. In keeping with its international orientation, Curtin is to open a third collaborative campus in Singapore in November 2008.

Academic activities are arranged into four faculties in which teaching and research are conducted, namely, Curtin Business School (CBS), Health Sciences, Humanities, and Science and Engineering. In 2007, Curtin offered more than 700 undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The Centre for Aboriginal Studies offers bridging courses for Indigenous students.

As well as traditional face-to-face learning, Curtin offers a range of online learning resources and programs. In its commitment to equity of access to learning, Curtin aims towards providing a flexible, learner-centred environment.

In 2007, Curtin had the fifth largest student enrolment of any Australian university, with just over 41,000 students (Data Item 5.1). A pioneer of Australia's international student recruitment in the mid-1980s, Curtin opted for an outward orientation through internationalising its education. Also in 2007, Curtin enrolled the third largest cohort of international students in Australia representing about 41.5% of Curtin's student enrolments – approximately 17,000 – with just under half of them studying outside Australia. Curtin is also the third largest provider of offshore education of the Australian universities. In the same year, Curtin enrolled the largest number of Indigenous Australian students.

In 2007, the University had 1092 academic (with 337 academic sessional staff) and 1460 general staff, excluding the Curtin Sarawak and partner campuses (PF p19).

The University is financially stable, having had some years of substantial budget surpluses. Curtin has invested in the development of a research infrastructure which includes the \$130 million Resources and Chemistry Precinct. The University is in the process of rolling out a large capital expenditure program to improve its facilities for students and staff, including a multi-purpose Recreation and Events Centre.

#### **1.4 Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations**

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

The themes for Cycle 2 audits are chosen for their risk potential and are likely also to reflect the institution's own assessment of its developmental and strategic needs. As for Cycle 1 audits, AUQA aims to assist the University to enhance the quality and standards of its operations.

#### **Commendations**

1. AUQA commends Curtin for the development of the Curtin planning framework and its implementation. ....8
2. AUQA commends Curtin for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Work Planning and Performance Review Policy.....9
3. AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of the student evaluation system, eVALUate, to improve learning and teaching.....15
4. AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of its course renewal project, Curriculum 2010. ....16
5. AUQA commends Curtin for the quality of the physical environment at the Bentley Campus and for its responsiveness in addressing student concerns relating to campus security at Bentley. ....20
6. AUQA commends Curtin for ensuring and encouraging the active role which the Student Guild takes on boards and committees and in advocacy to improve the student experience at the University.....20
7. AUQA commends Curtin for the positive impact that student orientation has on the student experience at the University. ....22
8. AUQA commends Curtin for the widespread knowledge by students of the policy and penalties related to academic integrity and plagiarism. ....25

9.	AUQA commends Curtin for the effectiveness and efficiency of Curtin Business School international office (CBSi) and the Curtin International Office, including the positive ways in which CBSi’s expertise has enhanced the reputation of the University among partners. ....	29
10.	AUQA commends Curtin for the conceptualisation, establishment and successful development of the Curtin Sarawak Campus. ....	37
11.	AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of its internationalisation of research including the developing research record at Curtin Sarawak. ....	40

**Affirmations**

1.	AUQA affirms the actions being taken by Curtin to address staff workloads through the development and finalisation of the Workload Management System. ....	18
2.	AUQA affirms Curtin’s strategic approach to its educational engagement in regional and remote Western Australia. ....	24
3.	AUQA affirms Curtin’s intention to implement a central record-keeping system and to ensure that information on plagiarism cases are collated and analysed regularly. ....	26
4.	AUQA affirms that Curtin needs to consistently apply, and train staff in, the granting of recognition of prior learning across the University. ....	30
5.	AUQA affirms Curtin’s attention to the University transnational education contract management system to ensure stringent control and regular review. ....	31
6.	AUQA affirms that Curtin ensure that annual reviews of transnational education partnerships be strengthened and monitored for risk and implementation of policy. ....	33
7.	AUQA affirms Curtin’s recognition of the low academic performance of Curtin Sydney students and its need to investigate and address the issues. ....	39

**Recommendations**

1.	AUQA recommends that Curtin ensure that its risk management framework integrates all major external risks and comprehensively addresses academic risks. ....	12
2.	AUQA recommends that Curtin assess the resourcing needs to provide consistently high quality teaching and learning for all students at all locations and in all modes. ....	18
3.	AUQA recommends that Curtin consider additional ways to assist students (locally and offshore) to gain practical experience or locate work placements. ....	18
4.	AUQA recommends that Curtin strengthen the management of reputational risks in regional and remote Western Australia, and adjust its risk management processes. ....	25
5.	AUQA recommends that Curtin further strengthen quality assurance monitoring mechanisms to prevent future breaches of University academic protocols. ....	32

## 2 MATTERS FROM AUDIT CYCLE 1

The following excerpt from the AUQA Audit Manual outlines the scope and focus of Cycle 2 audits in dealing with progress achieved since Cycle 1:

### *AUQA Audit Report*

Recognising the importance of quality enhancement and improvement, the audits consider whether the recommendations in the Cycle 1 AUQA audit report have been implemented. A sample of recommendations is selected and checked.

### *Changes to Quality Systems and Processes*

AUQA seeks evidence of the increasing effectiveness of the institution's quality assurance and improvement system/framework since Cycle 1. (AUQA Audit Manual v4.1, p35)

In its Performance Portfolio, the University provided an updated report on progress in implementing recommendations from the 2002 AUQA Audit Report. In addition to the recommendations specifically addressed below, relevant matters relating to recommendations from the 2002 AUQA audit are discussed in sections 3 and 4.

### 2.1 **Recommendations 3, 7, 8**

The 2002 AUQA Audit Report made a number of recommendations which focused on planning linkages and processes, including lessening bureaucratic requirements and avoiding excessive detail in policies and processes (Recommendation 3). It also recommended that the policies and processes should be implemented across the University (Recommendation 7). The Report also recommended that there be greater clarity of the parameters for deciding which activities should be located at University, division or school level (Recommendation 8).

There have been three reviews of the planning process completed since 2000. After the last AUQA audit, the University conducted a review of its planning framework which led to a simplification of University plans, including fewer objectives and targets. The outcomes of the 2008 review are being used in the finalisation of the 2009–2013 Strategic Plan. The Panel heard that there has been concerted attention in this latest review to consult with and obtain feedback from relevant staff in setting the goals and strategies for the next strategic plan.

The Panel saw evidence that the Strategic Plan 2006–2008, faculty plans and enabling plans have a reduced number of targets. Each round of plans has had more elements linked to the plans for example, the linking of the budget to the plans (Recommendation 4 in the 2002 AUQA Audit Report). The Panel established that there is an explicit linking of the budget to strategic priorities, for example the C2010 project – a comprehensive University-wide course review process (section 3.3.2). The Panel noted that close attention is given to the use of external reference points and benchmarking (particularly with the ATN) in the planning and monitoring process.

The Audit Panel confirmed that the University plans, notably the enabling/operational plans, have been simplified and better integrated, and that staff have a high level of awareness of the plans, particularly as they pertain to their personal work plans and performance reviews. The

Panel gained the impression that the University has been mobilised around the Strategic Plan, with a clear statement of strategic objectives around which there is concentrated activity.

There is evidence of a systematic flow of strategic plan objectives and targets into sub-plans, and the Panel established in the interviews with staff that key performance indicators (KPIs) emerging from the Strategic Plan, were, for example, built into manager work plans at head of school level, and integrated into academic and general staff work plans.

The Panel confirmed that there are regular reporting mechanisms, including use of the recently developed and implemented student survey eVALUate, to monitor and assess progress against the Strategic Plan and annual Operational Plan and the achievement of KPIs. The Panel noted good practice in the faculties with the increasing use of reporting tools to track and meet KPIs. Monitoring of KPIs by the faculties is reported regularly at Academic Board. The Panel heard and saw in the documentation provided that the Board takes an active, systematic and comprehensive approach to the monitoring of the academic KPIs and academic standards. It was reported to the Panel that all staff are invited to the Academic Board monitoring meetings and forums.

### **Commendation 1**

#### **AUQA commends Curtin for the development of the Curtin planning framework and its implementation.**

The Panel noted that since the 2002 AUQA audit, Curtin has narrowed its ambition from being a 'world class university' (Recommendation 9 in the 2002 AUQA Audit Report) to 'being a leading university in education and research serving the wider region, with its strategic objectives to offer excellent teaching that facilitates learning, focus on areas of high impact, high quality research' (SM01.01). In order to achieve this, the University has pursued a number of strategies, including sharpening its strategic planning processes and linkages, increasing its international partners, establishing offshore and onshore campuses (Miri, Sydney and Singapore), increasing the University's research profile, responding to the educational needs of regional and remote WA, and increasing its international staff and student profile.

The Panel did not find major evidence that the quality of provision has been compromised, but given the current positioning, and the reasons offered for maintenance of these multiple fronts of activity, the University may wish to consider further the risk implications of its current growth strategy. In the context of a broad spread of University commitments, the University will need to find the balance in academic workloads between allocating adequate resources to provide quality teaching and learning, and actively resourcing and supporting the University's increasing research profile and outputs. Two possible risks identified by the Panel concern the impact on academic workloads of staff and the impact on the University's reputation of the lower student diploma and bachelor pass rates at the Sydney Campus (sections 3.3.4 and 4.4.2). It will be important for the University to consider explicitly ways to identify potential signs of the over-extension of its resources and their consequences in its institutional risk assessment activities.

The policy framework has also been reviewed and there has been an alignment and standardisation of all University policies, including putting in place a regular monitoring procedure to ensure that policies and procedures are updated and periodically reviewed. Where a Policy is only appropriate in a highly specialised area a faculty is permitted to hold and manage that specific policy. There are measures in place to check the implementation of critical policies across the University. Outcomes of this whole process have resulted in the simplification of procedures, the rationalisation of committees and ease of access to policies on the University

website. A concerted effort has been made to ensure that the relevant policies are made known to staff and students.

Policies have also undergone significant standardisation and review, with attention to the elimination of duplication. The Panel confirmed the easy access to a range of policies and procedures on the University website. Staff who met the Panel indicated their awareness of relevant University policies and procedures, and where to find them.

AUQA finds that the University has adequately addressed these recommendations.

## **2.2 Recommendations 10–11**

The 2002 AUQA Audit Report made two recommendations in the human resources area, namely, that *annual performance reviews be consistently carried out, with relevant data available to ensure their utility to both the staff member and Curtin* (Recommendation 10) and the provision of mandatory leadership training for academic leaders (Recommendation 11).

Progress has been made through the development of the Work Planning and Performance Review (WPPR) Policy and its associated *Curtin Expectations* for academic staff, which consolidated existing policies. The WPPR Policy requires that all staff members have a current 12-month work plan which is aligned to the University and the particular area's strategic directions. There is close monitoring by line managers and Internal Audit of compliance with this policy. The recently established Organisational Development Unit provides training for supervisors to conduct performance reviews.

The Panel heard consistently from Curtin staff, both onshore and offshore, that they have a current work plan with identified KPIs, including the expected staff duties, work priorities, outputs and outcomes for the following year's work, career development and progression plans, and development opportunities for the next 12 months. Staff believe the process to be very useful and working well. The Panel confirmed some instances where the performance review process has been applied, including the development and improvement paths for under-performing staff.

### **Commendation 2**

#### **AUQA commends Curtin for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Work Planning and Performance Review Policy.**

The Curtin Leadership and Management Program provided academic leadership training until 2007. It was then refocussed and developed as a Head of School Leadership Training Program, to be offered through the Organisational Development Unit which was established in late 2007. Given the Program's recent introduction, the Panel is unable to comment on its effectiveness. Curtin is encouraged to ensure that all heads of schools, and other academic leaders, derive the maximum benefit from the Program. The Panel was informed that the Organisational Development Unit will provide broader leadership training for course coordinators and unit controllers.

The Panel noted that there have been recent changes to the senior leadership structure of the University with executive deans now titled Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC). The Panel established that training for the PVCs is addressed in a number of ways, including individualised induction and formal coaching.

AUQA is satisfied that Curtin has adequately addressed these recommendations.

### **2.3 Recommendation 16**

Recommendation 16 of the 2002 AUQA Audit Report stated that *criteria for registration as a supervisor of research students be made more precise, that registration be mandatory for supervisors, that adequate training and development opportunities be provided for existing and potential supervisors, and that criteria and procedures for de-registration be set down.*

In 2003 a decision was taken by the University, on the recommendation of the University Graduate Studies Committee, not to make registration obligatory, but instead to strengthen its approach to supervision through providing expanded professional development and improving the implementation of the register. In early 2008, under the leadership of the recently appointed Dean of Graduate Studies, and in recognition of supervisor registration good practice in other Australian universities and of the increased research focus of the University, the development of a compulsory register of supervisors for HDR students was started in March. Until the guidelines for mandatory registration were approved, there was a modest increase of names on the register. With the recognition that there was a substantial impediment for early career academics to register, a two-level process was introduced to accommodate early career academics who have not yet attained experienced supervisor status. This new approach has allowed for more supervisors to be registered, as well as providing an incentive for early career academics to place their names on the register.

A range of seminars and workshops is provided to academic staff to develop their supervision skills, and to enable them to meet the criteria for registration. Data presented to the Panel showed that from 2006 to the end of the first semester in 2008 there has been a large uptake by staff, including some research students who are also staff (SM01.33, updated on 6 October 2008).

The Panel heard in interviews that the advantages of the register are that: it provides a mechanism to record and monitor who has been trained; it is a valuable tool for students to use when they are looking for a supervisor; it also reassures students that the University has the capacity to manage its research supervision and training, and the quality of its supervisors; and it is a guide to better academic workload management. The Panel heard that at the time of the Audit there are more than 500 names on the register of about 800 possible names, and that supervisors have until June 2009 to place their names on the register.

While there were some concerns about the supervision experiences of particular students, there was general reassurance that the University was moving to a more comprehensive quality assurance provision in research higher degrees. The Panel is satisfied that the recommendation is currently being addressed, but it noted that it has taken the University some years to address comprehensively the substance of a mandatory supervisor register.

### **2.4 Changes at Curtin and Improvements to Internal Quality Assurance**

#### **2.4.1 Organisational and Cultural Changes**

Since 2006, senior leadership structural changes and organisational changes have taken place to shift University-wide services to a shared services model to enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the University. These changes are still being implemented.

As already noted, as a result of the restructuring since the last audit, responsibilities are clearer at a range of levels in the University, for example within CBS with transnational education responsibilities. There is a leadership approach which depends on a matrix system of

management to achieve the strategic objectives of the University. The Panel recognises that considerable attention has been given to the balance between central oversight and control, and devolution of responsibility to faculties and organisational units.

The Panel noticed that to overcome the possible silo effect at the University, there is increasing communication through sharing of information and good practice across faculties and areas of responsibility. An example is the way in which CBSi shares some of its good practice in relation to transnational activities. The Panel noted that the distributed model in some aspects of the University's work requires meetings to share information, for example the deans (teaching and learning), the deans (international) and the deans (research). The Panel notes, though, that further work is still required in this area to accomplish the maximum benefit for the University as a whole.

The Panel heard from a number of staff of a greater sense of clarity about the purpose and strategic direction set by the University in the last few years. The Panel also was informed about institutional cultural changes taking place at Curtin including closer working across faculties, a clearer focus on quality and professional development and an institutional pride in Curtin's international brand. There was general consensus that the University is moving forward with greater clarity and direction.

#### 2.4.2 Risk Management

Since the AUQA audit in 2002, Curtin has introduced a customised risk management framework. Under the new leadership at the University, it was recognised in 2006 that the area of risk management needed tightening. New processes were put in place at the beginning of 2007. Also in 2007, Internal Audit developed an instrument to identify and assess risk in the areas of teaching and learning, and international activities. Risk assessment and management is carried out at faculty level and reported upwards. A number of areas of risk were identified and actions were taken to address the risks.

In a review of the approach to risk taken at Curtin, the Panel is of the opinion that while there has been significant progress in relation to risk management, greater attention must be given to linking risk to the Strategic Plan and University Operational Plan, as well as ensure that faculties are better aware of the risks managed at the senior level in the University. In general, there seemed to be a disconnection between the strategic risks considered at the Council level and the operational risks considered at a faculty level. In particular, in a review of documentation, the Panel noted that many of the risk analyses conducted for offshore courses failed to include external risks. It would be wise for the University to ensure that relevant risks, for example potential political instability or health risks, are addressed in these documents, and that the documentation is reviewed by a senior member of staff.

A second area which will require ongoing development and attention is the identification and assessment of academic risks, including those in transnational education. The Panel noted that some reference is made to this in the Portfolio. Once again, in a review of the documentation it was not clear to the Panel that it is receiving sufficient attention, nor that identified key risks were being followed up with a sense of urgency. There are some outstanding risk issues from 2006 which Curtin intends to clear by the end of 2008.

With the introduction of the academic standards framework document, it will be important that the faculties and the Academic Board assume a greater role and management of identifying and managing academic risks.

### **Recommendation 1**

**AUQA recommends that Curtin ensure that its risk management framework integrates all major external risks and comprehensively addresses academic risks.**

#### 2.4.3 Improvements to Internal Quality Assurance

The Planning and Quality Framework was reviewed as part of the preparation for the development of the Strategic Plan 2009—2013. The Panel notes the rigour with which the review was conducted, for example, through interrogating the links of quality to planning. The Framework advances the concept of continuous quality improvement and emphasises alignment with the Strategic Plan with its use of balanced scorecard elements. A structured planning process has been initiated where:

From this structured review process there has evolved a greater focus on environmental scans, benchmarking and Academic Board-led monitoring meetings and fora, resulting in a refreshed University Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Objectives and Indicators of Success. (PF p24)

As the University itself noted, however, this may have been to the detriment of attending to the quality issues. The Panel concurs with the conclusion reached by the University that there needs to be a focus on quality and leadership development.

There is an approved policy in place for scheduled school and area reviews. This complements the Course Review Policy which outlines annual and five-yearly curriculum reviews.

Quality responsibility is attached to the KPIs of senior managers and a devolved approach to monitoring for quality is in use. Given the size and complexity of the University, it is important for Curtin to continue to consider the integration and consistency of assuring and managing quality across all its activities, and importantly, for example, in the area of teaching and learning through the implementation and monitoring of the Curtin student evaluation instrument, eVALUate (section 3.3.1).

The Panel also concurs with the University that, besides considering the frequency of reviews, '[t]his may also be a good time to consider whether all reviews at Curtin, including those related to international activities, should be conducted by or at least have input from the Quality Enhancement unit' (SM01.15 p12). Further, in considering its current approach to quality assurance and management, Curtin should also give serious consideration to the kind of quality expertise it will require to support the shared approach to quality assurance, as well as the future roles and location of the Quality Unit within the University.

### 3 THEME: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

#### 3.1 *Selection of Theme*

In 2007, Curtin proposed the theme 'Ensuring the Quality of the Student Experience' for this audit. The University considered that addressing the theme would benefit Curtin in the short term, and would also bring significant longer term benefits in ensuring that the University develops robust and sustainable quality practices and outcomes.

AUQA's risk analysis of Curtin, which included consideration of the Strategic Plan, future direction of the University and indicator data, identified this to be an appropriate theme.

#### 3.2 *Strategic Relevance of the Student Experience*

The mission of Curtin University of Technology, as presented in the Portfolio, is that:

*Curtin is committed to innovation and excellence in teaching and research, for the benefit of our students and the wider community.*

Curtin states in its Portfolio that one of the key strategic objectives of the University is to enhance the student experience by pursuing a student-centred approach. The Curtin strategy states that it will:

1. *Provide excellent teaching to facilitate learning*, including implementing initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning, fostering a culture of scholarship and continuing to support excellent and innovative approaches to teaching delivery.
2. *Improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of all activities*, focusing teaching activities on areas of competitive strength that meet community needs and are financially viable, and developing and implementing standards and benchmarks for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. (PF p37)

The student experience at Curtin is considered as comprising not only teaching and learning, but also includes the whole experience from recruitment to graduation. The University aims to offer an excellent student experience through providing a relevant curriculum, an enabling teaching environment, good course delivery, administrative and support services, and a university and campus environment which supports teaching and learning.

Important mechanisms have been introduced to improve the student experience and thus to increase student success. These include the use of the student evaluation system (eVALUate), the Curriculum 2010 project for course renewal (using the triple-i model), the introduction of the academic standards framework, and the Foundations of Learning and Teaching course to be completed by all new teaching staff, as well as attention to business processes within the University.

The University Teaching and Learning Plan sets out priorities and goals for teaching and learning, including performance objectives and targets against which to measure progress. Faculty teaching and learning plans mirror the priorities of the Teaching and Learning Plan. In a review

of the Teaching Priorities 2005—2007, the Panel notes that the University has addressed or is still addressing the priorities. A number of these receive comment in the audit findings.

### **3.3 Quality of Teaching and Learning**

A summary of the University's performance on measures used to allocate funding from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is provided in Data Item 5.2. While the ranking within the ATN cohort should be read as indicative only (it reflects very small differences in performance), Curtin is consistently placed in the middle, while on a few indicators it performs above the average. The Panel notes that local conditions, including employment opportunities in Western Australia, may in part explain the comparatively low proportion of graduates in full-time study.

The latest available data from the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) indicates that in 2006 Curtin's Overall Satisfaction Index is around the cohort average and slightly lower than the sector average (Data Item 5.3). The broad fields of education are generally below the respective ATN and national averages, except Education, which is well above the ATN and national averages, as is Engineering (Data Item 5.4). Curtin's 2006 Good Teaching Scale average is at its highest level in four years and is in 2006 above the cohort average and around the sector average (Data Item 5.5). The 2006 Generic Skills Scale average is above the cohort average and close to the sector mean (Data Item 5.6). These data must be considered in relation to Curtin's low CEQ response rates from 2003–06, which increased in 2006 to 50.7%.

#### **3.3.1 Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction Survey and eVALUate**

The Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction (CASS) survey was introduced in 2002 and measures the quality of the student experience of service and support. Data from 2004–06 indicated that student overall satisfaction with Curtin courses has increased over the period (at 79% in 2006) (Data Item 5.7). Positive responses for questions, such as teaching staff feedback, effort to make subjects interesting, and help for students with difficulties, were lower although rising.

With the introduction of the online eVALUate unit survey in 2005, it was decided in 2007 that the teaching-related questions were to be removed from CASS and included in the eVALUate survey. Data from eVALUate shows that overall student satisfaction has increased between 2005 and 2007 (Data 5.8). The Panel is satisfied that Curtin acts on the feedback received from students and reports back to them on actions taken on the eVALUate website and increasingly through the unit outlines.

eVALUate received a 2007 Carrick Citation for outstanding contribution to student learning. The survey operates at two levels surveying both the unit and the teaching. The Panel is able to confirm the positive impact which the eVALUate unit survey is having on learning and teaching. Its structure has been developed in such a way as to obtain breadth and depth of student feedback. All campuses in Australia and at Sarawak use the survey and it is also being used by Curtin students in partner institutions. The Panel established that the use of eVALUate is mandatory (ie not at the lecturer's discretion), but there is lecturer discretion on what is posted on the website. As already noted, students can track reports and improvements on the eVALUate website.

Reports on the survey are regular agenda items on University, faculty, school and campus level committees. eVALUate results are used for academic staff work planning and also for promotion purposes. It also is used as evidence in the Teaching Performance Index (which allocates rewards to staff who agree to a teaching survey). The Panel confirmed across campuses and

locations that changes were made as a result of the feedback from students, from addressing poor teaching through the use of the 'traffic light' system to make curricular and pedagogical changes in teaching units. Feedback to students is included in the Online Unit Builder. Data from the survey is also used in annual and comprehensive reviews. During the offshore visits, a number of partners mentioned the use of eVALUate data to assess lecturer performance. The Panel noted that attention is being given to raising student response rates which are low.

The Panel noted the development of eVALUate Graduate and eVALUate Employer to generate data for use in annual and five-yearly course reviews and for area reviews. A biennial eVALUate Services is being implemented in 2008 to elicit feedback from staff on the services provided.

The Panel commends the University for developing robust evaluation instruments, their systematic use across the University and acting on the results to sustain continuous quality improvements in a range of areas at the University.

### **Commendation 3**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of the student evaluation system, eVALUate, to improve learning and teaching.**

Curtin has also participated in the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement. Curtin uses the findings to validate its internal evaluation instruments for quality improvement purposes.

#### **3.3.2 Curriculum 2010 Project**

The curriculum renewal project (C2010) is intended to ensure that by the beginning of the 2010 academic year Curtin will have a three year history of course reviews, a fully implemented course review process and the embedding of the triple-i model in courses.

Beginning in 2007, courses are undergoing systematic reviews which focus on the monitoring and improvement of Curtin's curriculum. The annual course review and the comprehensive five-yearly course reviews make considered use of the surveys mentioned in section 3.3.1. Key instruments used in the comprehensive course reviews are a needs analysis and a curriculum mapping of learning outcomes, assessment and graduate attributes.

The University's approach to teaching is based on outcomes captured in the Graduate Attributes Policy. There are nine graduate attributes:

- Apply discipline knowledge, principles and concepts
- Think critically, creatively and reflectively
- Access, evaluate and synthesise information
- Communicate effectively
- Use technologies appropriately
- Utilise lifelong learning skills
- Recognise and apply international perspectives
- Demonstrate intercultural awareness and understanding
- Apply professional skills (SM02.10)

Where appropriate, the nine graduate attributes are mapped to professional competencies. Since 2005 Curtin has achieved its set target of achieving above 80% in positive student responses on the 'clear identification of unit learning outcomes'.

At the time of the Audit Visit, 38 courses had been reviewed, with 83 reviews in progress, and 140 courses identified for review in 2009. By 1 September 2008, with 683 active courses in the student administration system, Student One, Curtin has achieved a 22% reduction in courses. 209 low-enrolling courses are in the process of being withdrawn. Even though a number of moribund units were on the database and easy to eliminate, Curtin has achieved a 30% reduction in the number of units to 4773. By 2009, the University anticipates that it can reduce the number of units to around 3500 (SM02.64).

The Panel notes that Curriculum 2010 is having a major impact across Curtin. The objectives of C2010 are clear and well articulated, and are well-known and understood across the University (including among Curtin staff at partner institutions). C2010 has already produced some intended results and has a competent project team to support the faculties.

#### **Commendation 4**

##### **AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of its course renewal project, Curriculum 2010.**

In reviewing the shape and focus of its courses, Curtin intends that a distinguishing feature of the University's offerings will be the embedded Curtin triple-i curriculum model. There are three emphases to the model:

- industry (enhancing links with business and industry through increasing work placements, work integrated learning and internships)
- international/intercultural/indigenous (embedding and assessing contextual awareness and skills in every course)
- interdisciplinary (allowing for greater interdisciplinary study as appropriate within professional, accredited and postgraduate courses).

The triple-i model is still being introduced and implemented across the University, and the full impact of the model in courses and units is yet to be felt. The Panel noted issues still to be addressed. For example, slow progress is being made because of the complexity of the Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Arts courses, and a number of courses do not allow students to select electives in other faculties. The Panel considers that Curtin has a workable framework in place and triple-i has the potential to further differentiate the University's courses from other universities in the sector within the anticipated timeframe.

A key test of the triple-i model will be the recognition of its achievement by students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders.

#### **3.3.3 Academic Standards Framework**

The ATN Academic Standards Project aims to explain academic standards and set performance measures and benchmarks against the standards for use across the ATN. In 2008 an ATN Standards Framework is being advanced across the five institutions. In parallel with this, a Curtin project, started in 2007, consolidated Curtin's academic standards into a workable and understandable framework which is aligned to University policy and external reference points, and is monitored for compliance and continuous improvement.

The University made available to the Panel the document, Curtin Academic Standards: A Guide (May 2008). The Panel found that the document consolidates various aspects of University policy documents. Annual monitoring by the Academic Board of the standards is an explicit requirement. The University is in the process of addressing awareness of and compliance with

the document. Allowing for its recent finalisation, the Panel is of the view there is growing familiarity and acceptance among Curtin staff of the standards document. The Panel considered that some of the 'measures' will require further adjustment and alignment within the standards document and with external criteria.

The University recognises that it still has work to do to ensure that the standards framework document is known, understood and used consistently across the faculties and standards required externally are being demonstrably met.

In a sector which is grappling with the concept and definition of academic standards, the Panel congratulates the University for beginning to develop of an academic standards framework. Further development and use of the framework should provide clarity for all stakeholders of the academic standards set by Curtin as well as the assurance that they are closely monitored and maintained.

### 3.3.4 Excellent Teaching that Facilitates Learning

Curtin has a number of notable staffing features in its large international staff profile and balanced gender distribution at the executive level, including a 75% increase in women as heads of school since 2002.

Enabling the success of students and the achievement of the learning outcomes and graduate attributes is a key University commitment, alongside the commitment to raise the University's research profile. Curtin gives priority to attracting and retaining high quality staff. The second Valuing Curtin Staff Plan (2006—2008) sets out the 'plan for the support, development and growth of its people, work environment and organisational culture'. There is an action plan which allocates targets, initiatives and responsibilities across a range of areas.

The University conducted a Quality of Working Life Survey in 2006 and has followed it up in 2008 with the Your Voice Staff Climate Survey. The Your Voice Report (May 2008) was made available to the Panel. With a 67% staff response rate, the Your Voice survey indicates that staff are generally positive about working at Curtin. Areas for improvement include strengthening communication throughout Curtin (horizontal and vertical) and ensuring that teaching staff are provided with enough support to achieve their teaching goals.

The Panel heard from staff and students about concerns related to academic staff workloads, the staff/student ratios in some courses, large class sizes, under-preparedness of some sessional staff, limited contact of some students with lecturers, recognition of the large workload of some unit coordinators, and variable tutoring arrangements with large classes (with mixed results). The Panel also heard about the tension between reducing large class numbers in core courses and the University requirements for economies of scale and related efficiencies which are to be maintained and improved. The Panel is aware that these concerns and issues vary across the faculties. The Panel is not convinced by the argument that large class sizes do not affect students' academic experience and their success, and encourages Curtin to implement strategies to manage the academic impact of large class sizes and apply resources to reduce staff workload.

There are a number of competing academic workload pressures which need to be considered to accommodate administrative, teaching and research demands, including, where appropriate, the onshore and offshore academic commitments.

The University made available during the Audit Visit a comprehensive set of documents relating to the development of the Curtin Workload Management System. The University is presently considering and reviewing these issues and other workload-related matters. The Panel concurs that the finalisation and implementation of the Workload Management System has the potential to address a number of staff workload concerns.

#### **Affirmation 1**

**AUQA affirms the actions being taken by Curtin to address staff workloads through the development and finalisation of the Workload Management System.**

As the University consolidates some of its activities (for example, its offshore campuses) and grows others (for example, research), it is imperative that the quality of the core activity of teaching and learning is not placed under threat through a re-direction of resources away from its key teaching and learning functions and the realisation in all courses of the triple-i objectives.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**AUQA recommends that Curtin assess the resourcing needs to provide consistently high quality teaching and learning for all students at all locations and in all modes.**

### **3.4 Preparation for Workplace Entry**

The Portfolio indicates Graduate Attribute 9 (apply professional skills) is regularly assessed as part of the curriculum for each course and through the formal learning process and professional experiences (including industry projects, work-integrated learning, professional placements and fieldwork).

A frequent comment of Australian employers is that universities should give greater attention to ensuring that practical work (including work-integrated learning) for students is encouraged and new opportunities explored, where necessary, to assist students to gain practical experience so that they are more 'work ready' when they graduate. While visiting offshore, the Panel heard that where students are not already employed while studying, there are few opportunities provided for students to develop or apply professional skills. In line with the goals of the triple-i model, Curtin should consider how the professional experience offered to students offshore is comparable to the professional experience provided to students in Australia (cf. section 4.3.2).

#### **Recommendation 3**

**AUQA recommends that Curtin consider additional ways to assist students (locally and offshore) to gain practical experience or locate work placements.**

The Panel met a number of industry partners who serve on advisory boards and employers of students or graduates (both onshore and offshore). The Panel heard that Curtin graduates are perceived to be generally well prepared for work and 'practice ready' (for example, in accounting). Industry partners are positive about the ways in which Curtin elicits their opinions on the relevance of courses and the skills needed by graduates in business and industry. It was reported that C2010 is having a positive impact on the deliberations of some industry advisory boards.

The Panel heard of instances where advisory boards are working extremely well, for example in engineering and accounting. It was reported, though, that in some cases it has taken years to

establish industry advisory boards and, while there has been positive improvement in the last few years, there are still some committees which are in the process of being formally established, for example, in the engineering faculty. Some committee members expressed concern that the committee must be seen as more than providing a perfunctory tick, through providing interactive value-adding.

A number of industry partners and employers that met with the Panel commented that Curtin must give greater attention to the 'soft skills' required for work-ready graduates, for example, communication skills (including telephone etiquette), formal writing skills (distinguishing report writing, formal letters and email communications) and appropriate work dress codes. Employers and industry representatives, both offshore and onshore, also expressed some concern about instances where the spoken and written English language proficiency of graduates is a hindrance, and in some professions constitutes a business risk. While the Panel recognises that a number of higher level skills are learned only when a graduate is employed, Curtin should consider ways in which it can address these concerns (section 4.3.2).

### **3.5 Teaching Spaces and Facilities (Physical and Virtual)**

The Bentley Campus environment contributes to the local student learning experience. The layout of the Campus which is the result of careful attention to the location of buildings and open areas which are not intersected by roads or parking bays, provides staff, students and visitors with a congenial context for teaching, learning and research. As a result of the Engaging Learning Spaces project, the Campus facilities enhance the achievement of student-centred learning. Attention has also been given to the needs and inclusion of people with a disability.

The University Library provides the support for teaching, learning and research. The Library makes use of CASS to monitor its services. Staff and students have 24/7 electronic access from any location. Library facilities include group study spaces and new technologies provide information literacy programs, interactive online reference services, SMSs, blogs, etc.

Electronic technologies are well developed and the Curtin website and OASIS (the student portal) work well. The Panel heard of some concerns from offshore students about the slowness of the system and access to the Library. This may be related to students not having adequate knowledge to use the system. The Panel recognises that these issues may be caused by factors which lie outside the control of the University, but are worth investigation given the centrality of student use of OASIS and WebCT™/BlackBoard™ to the student experience. There is migration underway from WebCT™ to exclusive use of BlackBoard™. In general, students are happy with the University online services.

One area of concern noted by the Panel presents a potential mismatch between student internet quotas (different quotas for undergraduate students and postgraduate students) and the University's encouragement of students to make greater use of online facilities. The Panel encourages the University to investigate the internet quota concerns of students.

Flexible learning and delivery is supported by the Library and Curtin IT services. The use of learning management systems in units is increasing, along with iLectures. Staff are provided with adequate support in their use of electronic technologies.

Students who were interviewed confirmed the high levels of satisfaction with Bentley Campus facilities, including lecture rooms, as reflected in the CASS survey results from 2005–07. See sections 4.3 and 4.4 for the international offshore student experience of teaching spaces and facilities.

### **3.6 Student Amenities and Facilities**

The University is constantly looking at improving the housing facilities for students in the context of the demand and low supply, which is related to the current boom in the WA regional economy.

The Panel reviewed a number of instances where the University has acted to improve facilities and amenities, including a new recreation and events centre, a bus service, a shuttle bus to address parking constraints, an after hours courtesy shuttle bus to provide security, and improved facilities for students with disabilities.

The Panel notes the concerns from staff and students about safety and parking on the Bentley Campus. The Panel is satisfied that Curtin is being responsive in addressing the concerns as evidenced by a funding allocation of \$6.6 million over three years (beginning in 2006) for physical safety measures including the use of CCTV, improved lighting, the use of swipe cards, providing a visible security presence and increasing campus assistance points. As in many universities, parking remains a perennial concern for staff and students.

#### **Commendation 5**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the quality of the physical environment at the Bentley Campus and for its responsiveness in addressing student concerns relating to campus security at Bentley.**

The Student Guild reported to the Panel that it is well represented in the University's boards and committees, and student representation is the highest of any university in Australia. The Guild is positive that its voice and the concerns it raises on behalf of students are heard. It provided examples of responses by the University to its concerns, for example, improving support to students (both domestic and international) in language proficiency which contributed to the University's development of UniEnglish. The Guild has also been involved in the eVALUate and C2010 projects.

The Panel noted the positive role taken by the Student Guild representing student affairs at Curtin, including its constructive role and leadership in student orientation activities, and advocacy of student concerns at the University.

#### **Commendation 6**

**AUQA commends Curtin for ensuring and encouraging the active role which the Student Guild takes on boards and committees and in advocacy to improve the student experience at the University.**

The Curtin University Postgraduate Students' Association represents the interests of postgraduate students. While HDR students are positive about their experience at Curtin, greater monitoring of supervisors should occur to ensure that there is adequate supervisor support provided to HDR students.

### **3.7 Entry Standards, Orientation and Transition**

Curtin's entry standards are monitored by the Academic Services Committee. The average Tertiary Entrance Ranking (TER) for Curtin is 82.2 for those who enter via the TER, which is above the state average. English entry and recognition of prior learning requirements are addressed in section 4.2.2.

Curtin's domestic retention rate for commencing domestic students and pass rates point to positive performances against the sector and the ATN, particularly in the discipline groups of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, and Business Law and Economics. These rates are slightly below the sector and ATN averages in Health, and Humanities, Arts and Education.

A Student Retention Plan was formulated by the Student Transition and Retention Team. One measure in the Plan is the process of putting students at-risk on 'conditional status'. The Panel heard from students and staff that this status is a helpful intervention to support students in a timely manner.

There are a number of English language support systems in place at the University, some of which are faculty-based. The English Language Proficiency Project is a University-wide endeavour to improve and maintain English standards at Curtin. One element of the project is UniEnglish – an online English language needs assessment instrument which is available for students. UniEnglish is voluntary and identifies English language strengths and weaknesses, suggests a language development plan and points students to where to find language support. In the first semester of 2008, more than 7000 students accessed the pilot program.

The Curtin UniEnglish website also provides a range of English online language support links, online discussion forum, and an asynchronous online tutor for assistance with language-based questions. The website also provides access to staff to teaching resources and includes an online system to refer students with English language proficiency weaknesses to student learning support services.

While UniEnglish was designed for use by students, some staff members have also made use of the instrument. A key feature of the instrument in its initial pilot phase during 2008 is educative: that students must take the initiative to assess their own levels of English proficiency and seek assistance, if necessary. In 2009 UniEnglish will be added to the compulsory communications unit in the Bachelor of Commerce degree and all new to Curtin students are required to undertake UniEnglish as the first assessed assignment. Other faculties will follow thereafter. Students commented positively about the instrument.

The Panel congratulates the University for taking the initiative to develop an instrument to diagnose and provide support to the English language proficiency of students.

An important element in the student experience is the transition to university life. Curtin's Orientation Policy addresses the approach, standards and processes for orientation and transition into the University. This includes induction programs, which contain specific information for international students. Faculties and schools supplement the University orientation activities, although Curtin recognises that the discipline-based student orientation experience is uneven. The University is addressing the issue of unevenness, for example, through the Student Transition and Retention Team's Orientation Best Practice Checklist. CASS surveys indicate that student satisfaction with orientation has improved in the period 2004–07.

Students and staff were very positive about the comprehensive orientation which is provided to all new students. The Panel also heard that the Curtin support for the student orientation is significant and has a positive impact on the domestic and international student experience across all campuses and sites.

### **Commendation 7**

#### **AUQA commends Curtin for the positive impact that student orientation has on the student experience at the University.**

The Panel noted that rather than deal with improving communication skills at orientation only, communication skills are increasingly embedded in the curriculum. The Panel is of the opinion that this is a good practice.

### **3.8 Student Support**

The University's Support Services Plan 2007–2009 sets the priorities, initiatives and targets to support Curtin's onshore students. Offshore partners are contracted to provide equivalent services (section 4.3.1). Support services (known since 2005 under the umbrella of University Life) are centrally managed for the most part. Each faculty has a Student Services Support Manager. Five initiatives are identified in the Plan:

- Improve International student experience
- Increase access to support services for all regional campuses and distance education students
- Develop services that focus and impact on student transition and retention
- Develop the Careers Service relevant to the needs of students and employers and Alumni
- Increase student 'At Risk' support with specific focus on Equity student groups. (SM02.42)

These initiatives provide a shared focus for all University support services activities.

The Panel heard from some staff and students that there is an integrated approach to ensuring a positive student experience, where there is a strong team approach to providing services to the University community. The Panel noted evidence that the five initiatives are being addressed and that, as already noted in this Report, there is use of KPIs, targets and allocated responsibilities to monitor the standards of service and support provided by University Life.

The Panel identified some good practices under community engagement, where the Curtin Volunteers (and the John Curtin Weekend and other activities) provide service to the local and WA communities, and the student mentor program. The student mentor program started in 2006 in the Midwifery course and spread in 2007 to other schools and was extended to the Faculty of Humanities in 2008. It was reported that the student mentor program has had a positive impact on the integration and success of international students.

Students commented positively on the wide range of services available and the quality of support which is provided to students.

### **3.9 The Student Population**

Curtin has the largest number of Indigenous students enrolled in any Australian university. 43.1% of Indigenous higher education students in Western Australia were enrolled at Curtin in 2007. While above the state and sector averages, since 2002 there has been a slight decline in the access rate of Indigenous students at Curtin (ie the number of students who commence study in a given year). In 2006, the success and retention rates of Indigenous students are just below the sector average, and the same as the state average.

Improving the success and retention rates of Indigenous students is a priority for Curtin. As noted above, the interventions by the Student Transition and Retention project are a key mechanism to improve these rates. The Panel heard about the positive role played by the

Centre for Aboriginal Studies in supporting Indigenous students and staff, as well as providing advice and support to the faculties. The Centre offers a number of courses and programs to Indigenous students. Staff from the Centre are also actively engaged in educating non-Indigenous people, offering electives to all University and community members.

The access and participation rates for students from low socio-economic backgrounds have been steady from 2001–06. Access rates have increased from 2003–06 but are below the sector and state rates.

The access and participation rates for students from non-English speaking backgrounds decreased over the period 2005–06. Access rates are below state and sector rates, while the participation rate is above the state average.

Access and participation rates for regional students have increased in 2005–06. These are below the sector rates and above the state rates. The access rates for students from remote areas have remained consistent from 2001–06, and participation rates have declined slightly in the period 2004–06. Both rates for students from remote areas remain above the state rates and well above the sector rates, reflecting Curtin's regional presence.

### **3.10 Kalgoorlie and the Regional Centres**

As Curtin has the highest number of any Australian university of tertiary student enrolments in regional and remote Western Australia, the Panel included a one day visit by a delegation of the Panel to the Curtin campus in Kalgoorlie which is home to the Kalgoorlie section of the Western Australia School of Mines (WASM), jointly located between Kalgoorlie and Bentley. The Panel heard about the WA Regional Engagement Strategy.

Curtin offers nursing (through the School of Nursing and Midwifery) and education programs through the Centre for Regional Education (CRE) to a small number of students (mainly mature age students) as a community service to regional Western Australia, as part of the University's commitment to building sustainability and keeping skills in the WA communities. Many of the arrangements at the centres are linked to further education institutions. In Kalgoorlie, Curtin delivers education through the CRE, Vocational Training and Education Centre (VTEC) (under Curtin) and the WASM.

The CRE works well, given the constraints with respect to the running and resourcing of regional education. There are 80 students (70 EFTSL) and cohorts are small. The formation of the CRE has enabled the University to have a more systematic quality assurance approach to educational provision in remote locations. It is intended that greater use be made of technology to link students across the State in the same academic year, as regional cohorts, to enhance the learning process. The shift to the use of principally online educational technology is of significant concern to some students.

Online orientation is provided to CRE students and it works well. The Panel heard that the greatest challenge for Curtin is to provide a university experience for students where many see themselves as receiving training, rather than having a university experience. On the other hand, there are a number of advantages in enabling students to enrol in courses with CRE, where the student remains in the local community, with the additional advantage of many graduates potentially remaining in local regional and remote communities after graduation. The Panel noted that improvements identified in the 2008 Centres for Regional Education Report are being addressed (SM02.43).

Employers and external partners indicated that Curtin graduates and students are valued in industry and the professions. They were of the opinion that the regional community doesn't know enough about what Curtin offers through WASM, VTEC, and other courses (eg health and education) and Curtin needs to market itself more effectively in the region.

Curtin maintains that the legacy of the non-strategic approach to offering regional education must be addressed for quality and sustainability reasons. Previously there was no strategic plan to guide regional and remote education. The Panel concurs that CRE will need to be more strategic and consolidate its educational offerings in the regions, while being responsive and collaborative with local community expectations and the needs of students.

### **Affirmation 2**

#### **AUQA affirms Curtin's strategic approach to its educational engagement in regional and remote Western Australia.**

The Curtin campus in Kalgoorlie has a history which goes back to 1902, with its roots as the original School of Mines. Curtin assumed responsibility for the School in 1983 and which is now called the Western Australian School of Mines (WASM). WASM is co-located across the Curtin Kalgoorlie and Bentley campuses. 15% of students are female. A major advantage of WASM in Kalgoorlie is its location at the centre of a major industrial resources hub. There is an established campus with IT and library. The library is shared with VTEC and is accessible to local community members and alumni.

The Panel heard of a number of positive practices or improvements at Kalgoorlie, including a three-year timetable to increase bandwidth in the classrooms to grow the teaching partnership with three other universities and developing the interdisciplinary aspects of WASM's academic activities and research.

Students are positive about studying at Kalgoorlie, the qualified and specialised academic staff, the small class sizes, the library facilities, the disability services, the student orientation which is provided, and industry involvement in their courses. There have been two student feedback sessions held with students by the Director of the School and one of the key concerns of students was greater exposure to professional experience (fieldwork, internships, etc). Management reported that this is an area which requires formalisation.

A major challenge facing the regional campus in Kalgoorlie is the growth of student numbers since 2004, and the implications for staffing, space, etc, which must be understood in the context of the cyclical nature of the resources sector. There are over 1000 EFTSL enrolments, where 500 enrolments has been the norm until recently. This has implications for students seeking housing in a context which is already stretched by the resources boom. International students have problems in finding accommodation, claiming that while Curtin enrolls them it does not do enough to assist them in finding accommodation.

The first two years of mining engineering are taught at both the Bentley and Kalgoorlie campuses. The University decided to limit the first two years in mining engineering to the Bentley Campus. The decision was deferred in order to find ways to make the campus at Kalgoorlie educationally and financially sustainable.

External stakeholders expressed a strong view to the Panel that Curtin should consult the local community when it intends to make major changes in Kalgoorlie. It was reported that the local

community is supportive of Curtin, but they are not sufficiently engaged by the University in conversation, with the perception of experienced loss of community 'ownership' of the Kalgoorlie campus. It was also felt that Curtin could be more willing to participate in local initiatives (eg Women in Mining days). The Panel was informed that a WASM Advisory Board has been established and that it has met once. The Panel recommends that Curtin will need to give attention to strengthening its reputation and brand in Kalgoorlie, while striking a balance related to the identity of WASM across both its Bentley and Kalgoorlie locations.

Attention must be given in the University's risk assessment processes to managing reputational risk in regional and remote communities. This includes strengthening the strategies for managing Curtin's reputation and improving the management of relationships with regional communities which takes into account WA regional and cultural sensitivities.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**AUQA recommends that Curtin strengthen the management of reputational risks in regional and remote Western Australia, and adjust its risk management processes.**

### **3.11 Academic Integrity including Plagiarism**

The Panel explored plagiarism throughout the audit as an example of how the University manages an important academic issue.

The University has in place a range of documents and policies which articulate the University's commitment to academic integrity. The Plagiarism Policy, introduced in 2005, sets out the procedures for addressing plagiarism. The implementation of the Policy has enabled consistency in determining the seriousness of an incident of plagiarism, subsequent procedures, disciplinary measures and their formal recording.

A feature of the policy is that education for the prevention of plagiarism is an important measure to assist students to develop the necessary academic skills of scholarly research or attribution. Record keeping is done at school and faculty level, and the University Teaching and Learning Committee reviews the procedures for recording plagiarism and monitors the consistency of the use of penalties.

The Panel confirmed during the Audit Visits that there was widespread awareness among staff and students about plagiarism and the three levels of infraction. The Panel heard from staff and students, both onshore and offshore, of rigorous action taken when incidences of plagiarism were identified (sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.1). The Panel is of the opinion that Curtin has been successful in ensuring that there is widespread attentiveness to and knowledge of academic integrity and plagiarism among students across all campuses and partner institutions.

#### **Commendation 8**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the widespread knowledge by students of the policy and penalties related to academic integrity and plagiarism.**

While there is widespread awareness about plagiarism by students, the Panel noted two issues identified by Curtin which require follow up. Students signalled that incidences of plagiarism were often related to a weak understanding of what constitutes plagiarism or to poor English writing skills. The Panel heard that students require more education on how to prevent plagiarism, with a focus on learning scholarly skills.

Secondly, the Panel is of the opinion that developing a central record-keeping system for the monitoring of plagiarism cases will enable the University to analyse these cases and design educational interventions. As noted in the Portfolio, '[r]ecord-keeping at School and Faculty level will be strengthened through the implementation of centralised record-keeping procedures' (PF p57). Curtin is encouraged to ensure that this is done.

### **Affirmation 3**

**AUQA affirms Curtin's intention to implement a central record-keeping system and to ensure that information on plagiarism cases are collated and analysed regularly.**

## 4 THEME: INTERNATIONALISATION

### 4.1 *Internationalisation at Curtin*

Internationalisation is a major focus at Curtin and is defined as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the University’ (SM01.05). This is reflected in the Strategic Plan 2006–2008 where international engagement requires ‘a key focus on our international markets, clients and partners’ (PF p79). There is a strong international identity at Curtin which has been shaped and enhanced by its isolated geographical location on the west coast of Australia and in its position as a gateway to Asia.

Curtin states that ‘the University’s future lies with Asia’. International students onshore and offshore are an important aspect of Curtin’s international positioning and financial strength. The first offshore partnership started with a twinning program in Singapore in 1986. In the 1990s, Curtin began to promote actively and support the internationalising of all University activities.

The International Plan (2006–2008) provides a strategic overview for internationalisation initiatives, including image, presence, staff and student interactions and financial return to the University, and develops Curtin’s strategic objectives. This Plan, with its performance targets for measuring progress, is reflected in the faculty and school plans. Positioning Curtin as an international university includes:

1. ‘A significant number and broad mix of students from different international backgrounds on all campuses, and especially on the main campus.
2. A significant Curtin presence in overseas locations
3. An international experience for students involving:
  - Academic activities in an international location
  - Integration of learning and social activities with students from other nationalities and cultures
  - Curriculum which includes relevant aspects from other countries’ (SM01.05).

International student enrolments at Curtin are significant, comprising 41.5% of the total student numbers in 2007 (Data Item 5.1). The Panel recognises Curtin’s strong commitment to internationalisation, and as noted below, it has built and is continually augmenting and strengthening its documented set of processes. The improvements to the quality assurance system and culture change noted in section 2.4 include the international activities of the University.

In recent years, the University has improved the management of international activities, many of which were initially developed through the Curtin Business School international office (CBSi). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (International) is responsible for realising the internationalisation goals and is supported in particular by the pro vice-chancellors and faculty deans (international), the International Committee, the regional strategy groups, and the International Marketing Management Review Committee. There is regular reporting to the Academic Board through the International Committee.

#### 4.1.1 Internationalisation of the Curriculum

Section 3.3.2 noted the Curtin course review process and its links to C2010 and the triple-i model to ensure the currency of the curriculum. Two graduate attributes (GAs) are pertinent to the internationalisation of the curriculum, and address 'developing an international perspective' (GA 7) and enabling 'intercultural understanding' (GA 8). The curriculum map checks that GA 7 and GA 8 are addressed in the curriculum and that provision is made to assess them throughout the course.

As part of ensuring the internationalisation of the curriculum and in providing professional development for staff, a Frameworks for Internationalisation website assists academic staff or partner staff by providing learning modules.

A Foundations of Learning and Teaching Program, which includes teaching culturally diverse groups of students, is compulsory for all new-to-Curtin academic staff.

The Panel is of the opinion that internationalisation of the curriculum is underway at Curtin, and as part of C2010 and the triple-i model, it has yet to be reviewed and comprehensively applied to all University curricula. While the Panel is aware that there are limits to the amount of generic triple-i material which can be incorporated into the curriculum, the Panel considers that internationalisation is one of the more successful aspects of the triple-i model.

#### 4.1.2 Internationalisation of Staff

The University has strategies and systems in place to attract and retain international staff. In 2007, there was a wide representation of staff from 73 countries (SM03.06). Using the experience and the programs developed by CBS, staff are provided with training on intercultural approaches to teaching, which includes new-to-Curtin staff receiving induction before beginning offshore activities, and the offering to all teaching staff of online modules which provide good practice examples of cross-cultural learning in the classroom.

The international profile of Curtin staff enriches the student experience and allows for the development of meaningful internationalisation at the University. The Panel did, however, hear concerns both onshore and offshore about the spoken English language proficiency skills of some academic staff. In some cases (onshore and offshore), students struggled to understand the spoken English of the lecturer. It is noted that staff have access to and make use of UniEnglish and University language support. While the eVALUate traffic light system picks up these concerns, Curtin must ensure that at the time of employment all academics are able to be understood by students.

A number of students, both onshore and offshore, thought that academic and general staff could do with more cross-cultural training. Given the large international staff and student numbers, the Panel encourages Curtin to ensure that all staff, and not only new-to-Curtin staff, are trained and supported in developing cross-cultural awareness and skills. Curtin is urged to ensure that all general and academic staff are trained and supported in developing cross-cultural awareness and skills.

#### 4.1.3 Student Mobility

Students are exposed to internationalisation in a number of ways, including activities on campus, joining in student exchange, study abroad, study tours and clinical placements. The University allocates funding for exchange programs which allows for the participation of a modest number of students.

The Panel heard from students and staff about the positive international exposure which benefits students, including Occupational Therapy (OT) Study Abroad, Go Global, study tours, and some examples of studying at offshore partner sites.

The Panel heard from a number of international alumni about their positive experience of completing or continuing their studies at the Bentley Campus. Curtin intends to increase this mobility.

## **4.2 International Students**

### **4.2.1 Recruitment**

Curtin's international recruitment activities are managed by the International Office. The Curtin Business School international office, CBSi (which has responsibility within CBS for the business development and administration of offshore programs) and the Humanities International and Marketing Office are ISO accredited, which includes the management and monitoring of recruitment agents. In 2008, Curtin has 221 agents in 51 countries.

CASS results shows that in the period 2005–07 more than three quarters of students surveyed are satisfied with the services provided through the International Office. The Panel heard from students that international onshore students rate positively the International Office. There was also consistent high regard for CBSi by partners and students at all the sites visited by the Panel and that the international Curtin brand is known and respected. The Panel heard from a number of partners that during their annual reviews they singled out the CBSi for the positive and collegial way in which it engaged with partner institutions.

#### **Commendation 9**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the effectiveness and efficiency of Curtin Business School international office (CBSi) and the Curtin International Office, including the positive ways in which CBSi's expertise has enhanced the reputation of the University among partners.**

The Panel checked a range of recruiting and marketing materials across a number of sites, as well as the adherence to Curtin policies and procedures, and no major concerns were identified.

### **4.2.2 Entry Standards, Articulation and Recognition of Prior Learning**

Curtin marketing material, including its hard copy offshore marketing material, is clear about the minimum entry requirements. The Panel noted that Curtin has given significant attention to ensuring that English entry standards are met, where there is a clearly defined IELTS level required for study, as well as tables of equivalent qualifications which would be recognised. Nevertheless, despite the University's attempts to manage the English language requirements at admission, students are being admitted into courses with varying levels of English language proficiency. Curtin is dealing with this in a number of ways: through its English language proficiency project, which includes the use of UniEnglish, a voluntary diagnostic test of academic reading, writing and listening competence, and in specific compulsory communications units embedded into the curriculum (section 3.7).

Curtin has taken significant steps to address the issue of English language proficiency, and in some transnational instances, it has insisted, given the inconsistency in IELTS equivalences, that students with a diploma applying for admission must also meet the threshold of IELTS 6.0.

The Panel noted the use made of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer arrangements. In 2008, a Recognition of Prior Learning website was launched which provides a database against which prospective students can check how much RPL would be awarded. There is regular formal reporting by the International Office to the Academic Board on the academic performance of students at unit level who have entered through the various articulation pathways (SM03.16).

In a number of the offshore visits the Panel heard that RPL occasionally was inconsistently applied by staff at Bentley. A needs analysis of the Bachelor of Commerce also indicated that the process of granting RPL requires consistent attention. It is important that there is adequate training for staff in granting RPL and Curtin should ensure that it has a robust internal RPL precedent database to ensure consistency.

#### **Affirmation 4**

**AUQA affirms that Curtin needs to consistently apply, and train staff in, the granting of recognition of prior learning across the University.**

#### 4.2.3 International Student Performance

The academic progress of international students, both onshore and offshore, is monitored by the Academic Board. In the period 2004–07, University data show that in 2007 the overall pass rates for onshore international students at 85.7% was marginally lower than that of domestic students at 86.9% (PF p92). In the same period, the international offshore undergraduate students success rates increased from 83.2% in 2004 to 86.9% in 2007 (SM03.17). International student retention rates in this period are above the whole student cohort (PF p92).

Data available in Curtin's 2007 Institution Assessment Framework (IAF) Portfolio show that progress rates for overall commencing bachelor students over the period 2004–06 at Curtin are lower than the cohort and sector averages, but with domestic students performing better than international students (Data Item 5.9).

#### 4.2.4 The International Onshore Student Experience

International onshore students have the same access to all services available to other Curtin students (section 3). The 2006 AEI International Student Survey shows that the international onshore student experience was comparable to other universities and in a number of areas performed above the sector average.

### 4.3 *Transnational Education*

Curtin's first offshore education collaboration was started in 1986 with the Marketing Institute of Singapore. In 2007, there were around 8600 students enrolled in offshore programs, the majority of whom were in Curtin Business School programs. Curtin is in the process of increasing its course offerings to include other disciplines. Offshore student numbers have dropped since 2005, due to increasing competition from other providers, and as a result of a strategic decision of the University in 2006 to terminate underperforming, financially unsustainable and non-strategic programs.

Curtin developed an offshore campus in Miri, Sarawak in 1999, a Sydney Campus in 2005 and a Singapore Campus in 2008. During this time and particularly in the last two years, quality assurance processes have been strengthened and a number of poorly-performing programs have been terminated. The Panel considers that this more consolidated approach to transnational education brings a number of benefits in management and reputation to Curtin's extensive transnational offerings.

#### 4.3.1 Transnational Education Quality Assurance

Responsibility for the management of the selection of partners and the educational arrangements rests with the DVC (International) in association with the faculty PVCs, and assisted by the deans (international) and other senior administrative staff.

The main regulatory mechanism for partnerships is the Collaborative Education Services Policy. It comprehensively covers all aspects of the process of initiating, operating, reviewing and terminating offshore programs, and is aligned to meeting the requirements of the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes and the AVCC Guidelines for Provision of Education to International Students. This Policy provides a detailed table of quality guidelines and assessment criteria. The contract sets out the quality assurance responsibilities and areas of responsibility for Curtin and the partner institution.

CBSi has developed a CBS International Quality Manual which covers operational procedures for offshore activity (SM03.23). Part of this documentation is the development of a Service Level Agreement between CBSi and schools within the Curtin Business School, and sets out the responsibilities of each party and the associated service standards (SM03.24). The Panel considered the Service Level Agreement an example of good practice. There are a number of quality assurance mechanisms in place for offshore teaching arrangements, including annual offshore program reviews.

A review of a number of contracts showed them to be comprehensive and to adequately address the academic quality assurance responsibilities and related processes. During the annual review of offshore programs the contracts are reviewed. The Panel noted that there was one contract which dated back about 20 years and which had not been formally renewed or updated but the partnership has continued. The Panel heard that this is an area which is being improved through greater management and monitoring.

#### **Affirmation 5**

##### **AUQA affirms Curtin's attention to the University transnational education contract management system to ensure stringent control and regular review.**

Since 2006, five partnerships have been discontinued by mutual consent, and a further five through the normal expiry of contracts. The Panel checked that there are adequate processes and procedures and is satisfied that Curtin has appropriate 'teach out' arrangements in place (with evidence of the provision of individual student study plans), and is managing the process extremely well with the partner institutions.

At the Preparatory Visit the Panel was informed by the University senior leadership that internal processes at Curtin in 2007 identified two subprograms which were being offered in other countries that had not received formal internal Curtin approval nor had the receiving countries given official approval for the programs to be offered.

At the beginning of the Audit Visit, it was confirmed with the Panel that the programs had been terminated in the affected countries. Senior staff from Curtin met the students who accepted the offer by Curtin to complete their studies. The Panel is satisfied that the matter has been addressed and that quality management processes have been adjusted to prevent the re-occurrence of programs being offered without Curtin approval.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**AUQA recommends that Curtin further strengthen quality assurance monitoring mechanisms to prevent future breaches of University academic protocols.**

The Panel noted some inconsistencies in the tables of data provided to it relating to offshore programs and encourages Curtin to assure itself that it has accurate and up-to-date information on all its transnational education activities.

#### 4.3.2 Transnational Education Partnerships Visited by the Panel Delegation

After consideration of the large number of partnerships and a review of aspects such as materiality and risk, the Panel selected the following programs to sample with regard to quality assurance arrangements (Appendix A):

- Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing, Advertising and Accounting) offered in partnership with Charles Telfair Institute, Mauritius
- Bachelor of Applied Science (Architectural Science) and Bachelor of Arts (Mass Communications) offered in partnership with Limkokwing University in Malaysia
- Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing)(Advertising)(Accounting) offered in partnership with Metropolitan College in Malaysia
- Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing and Advertising) offered in partnership with Hong Kong University (HKU) Space
- Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting) offered in partnership with HKU Space — Centre for International Degree Programs
- Master of Finance (terminating program) offered in partnership with Open University Hong Kong
- Master of Accounting, Master of Business and Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing and Advertising) offered in partnership with the Marketing Institute of Singapore
- Bachelor of Nursing offered in partnership with CSM Academy International in Singapore.

On the basis of the visits, the Panel has gained an overview of Curtin's approach to transnational education and its management of academic quality.

Curtin has recently developed a comprehensive contract to regulate education partnerships which covers the essential aspects of providing transnational education. There are new contract monitoring processes in place and the comprehensive annual review provides an opportunity to make improvements to the partnership and the provision of education, including considering the improvement to the academic and student support and environmental aspects of the student experience. Barring a small number of concerns, the Panel noted overall that the partners have adequately resourced campuses (including teaching spaces), well-functioning administrative systems, informed and competent partner management and adequate ICT systems and support. There are functioning (and at least two instances of well developed and superior) quality management systems, adequate student services, and recreation facilities for Curtin students.

Partner institutions indicated that the working relationship with Curtin is very good, that there is good communication between the partners, that Curtin's administration processes work well, that senior Curtin staff are courteous and open to suggestions and feedback, and that procedures and quality assurance responsibilities are clearly established.

The Panel investigated the documentation related to the annual reviews of partnerships and the assessment of potential risks. The Panel noted that there was variation in the detail of the reviews, and what in some instances appeared to be a superficial approach to completing the forms by Curtin staff. The Panel heard that this perfunctory approach has been identified and is currently receiving attention, because the annual review is a critical opportunity to identify potential problems and risks.

#### **Affirmation 6**

**AUQA affirms that Curtin ensure that annual reviews of transnational education partnerships be strengthened and monitored for risk and implementation of policy.**

Academic staff who teach on Curtin programs make use of the Curtin teaching and learning documents and follow the Curtin administrative processes. New staff are provided with induction and opportunities for occasional professional teaching development. The Panel noted that in places where local staff are involved in the marking of continuous assessment that Curtin has identified the need for some further development and support in Curtin's approach to, and standards of, assessment. Academics are aware of and a number are participating in the C2010 and the triple-i review. There is a regular performance review conducted with academic staff, and staff are provided with feedback on teaching performance.

There is a high level of awareness of graduate attributes by both local staff and students, and students confirmed that there is alignment between what is in the unit outlines, the teaching and class work, and assessments. It was confirmed for the Panel that localisation of the course content is encouraged, supported and monitored by unit coordinators. As noted in section 3.11, the Panel is satisfied that Curtin has made a concerted effort to ensure that students are informed about plagiarism and its penalties, and that examples of cases where action has been taken were cited.

Students and alumni expressed satisfaction with the local teaching staff and commented that any concerns regarding poor teaching are addressed. However, students in a number of places had ongoing concerns about the teaching ability of some staff, as well as their spoken English.

Students and staff spoke highly about the role of the unit coordinator in supporting the teaching staff and students. Some staff observed, though, that some unit coordinator workloads may be too high, especially those working across multiple partners. In some cases, local teaching staff would like to receive more feedback from unit coordinators on student performance after a unit has been completed for the purpose of personal improvement.

Students expressed their satisfaction with the online support provided to them, including access through OASIS, BlackBoard™ and WebCT™. Students were positive about the online materials and access to the Curtin Library, although the Panel was told that some students have difficulty in accessing the Curtin Library. It was not clear whether it was a technology-related obstacle or as a result of student knowledge of how to use the system. The University is encouraged to explore the reasons for this and introduce remedies, where possible.

The Panel noted that international offshore students had limited awareness of online services, such as Going Global, an international job search tool provided by Curtin which enables students to search for jobs worldwide and access current information on cultural, political and living expenses in the relevant country (PF p54). It had not previously been available to offshore students but that has now been remedied. The University should consider ways to raise awareness of its availability with international offshore students.

Concerns were raised at each visit about English language proficiency of some students. The Panel noted that students have access to UniEnglish, and that the local partners provide support for students. In general, however, the Panel considered that consistent efforts had been made to enhance the English language standards of commencing students.

An area of consistent concern heard at all offshore visits was related to having marked assessments returned to students. Students expect to get their assignments back with written comments, either in a consolidated form for the group, or as individualised comments. The Panel heard many times from students that they do not always have assignments returned in a timely fashion, or they are not returned at all. Students also complained about receiving very few comments on their work. It was reported that due to moderation requirements turnaround times can be slow. The Panel noted that this was previously identified for improvement and action had been taken. This is a challenge faced by many universities. Curtin needs to identify the causes for the widespread delay in return of assignments to students and put processes in place to address student concerns.

The Panel established that Curtin has robust systems in place for the termination of programs. The Panel focused on two course teach out arrangements, and is satisfied that appropriate measures are in place. According to the conditions set in the contract, staff have been consulted on issues arising for the units which they teach. Students have received written notifications about the termination of the course and have individual study plans prepared, and are being given support to complete their courses. Meetings have been held with students, and follow up contact was made with students who were not present. The Staff and Student Consultative Committee has been involved in the termination processes of the courses.

Some partners highly rated the support provided by CBSi. Partners suggested that this was probably due to CBSi having a longer and larger offshore presence, and more resources than other faculties of the University. The Panel noted that Curtin is aware of this and encourages the University to continue to find ways to ensure that this expertise and experience could be better shared across the faculties.

The Panel heard from students, Curtin staff, alumni and external stakeholders (both onshore and offshore) about the strategic importance of a vibrant alumni association in a transnational education context. Curtin graduates have a positive reputation among employers, as well as in industry and business. The Panel noted the limited awareness or seeming absence of the role of alumni at Curtin in benefiting from the University alumni services or their role in supporting the University's objectives. The Panel encourages Curtin to explore its communications with its international alumni and strategies for strengthening this area.

The Panel heard from a number of students that they enrolled for courses on the understanding, either from the marketing material or indicated at registration, that they would have a choice of electives. However, it is generally the case that there are no electives to choose. While the Panel understands that it may be that students do not read the documentation properly, or that there may be a communication problem, it is important that Curtin ensures that the advertised electives are offered, in line with the Curtin Academic

Standards document (May 2008), or that it is made clear to prospective students which electives are available to them in any given course and location.

While the Panel heard about some examples of positive work-integrated learning and some opportunities for obtaining professional experience, industry experts, employers, and students themselves all noted the limited opportunities available for international offshore students to integrate professional experience into their studies and suggested that Curtin should give more attention to formally strengthen this area. The Panel concurs that this is an important dimension of attaining the graduate attributes and ensuring a quality student experience, and encourages Curtin to address this area (section 3.4).

#### 4.3.3 Student Satisfaction

Students offshore have used a modified CASS survey instrument. CASS results show improvement in student satisfaction from 2005–07 in a range of areas.

eVALUate is gradually being implemented across offshore locations, with the first surveys conducted in Curtin Sarawak, Charles Telfair Institute in Mauritius, and from Semester 1, 2008 at HKU Space in Hong Kong.

As noted above, while international offshore students have a generally positive experience there are a number of issues which need addressing to improve the quality of the international offshore student experience.

### 4.4 *Collaborative Campuses*

Curtin established its first offshore collaborative campus in Sarawak in 1999. This was followed in 2005 by the establishment of a second collaborative campus in Sydney as part of the continuing partnership with Navitas which manages the Perth-based Curtin International College. By the end of 2008, Curtin will have established a new collaborative campus with Navitas in Singapore to combine its existing operations and introduce new discipline areas.

The Panel noted that the development of the collaborative campus model supports Curtin's international objectives in a way which: provides for Curtin control of academic matters; consolidates offshore academic activities; diversifies sources of income; and is intended to enhance Curtin's reputation as an international university. This approach lessens a number of risks to the University and capitalises on partner operational expertise, as well as ensuring University control of academic standards (PF p101).

#### 4.4.1 Curtin Sarawak

Curtin's offshore collaboration is with Curtin (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (whose shareholders are the Sarawak State Government agents and local Sarawak business). The partner is responsible for the physical facilities and the campus operations, including staffing, finances, marketing and advertising. Curtin is responsible for all academic matters. There are appropriate governance and management systems in place.

Curtin Sarawak is maturing as a campus and becoming more autonomous, as appropriate to its size and scale. The Panel saw evidence of this growing autonomy being formally supported by discipline accrediting bodies. A Planning and Quality Office was established in January 2008 to support the growing Campus. The Panel noted that there may be too many layers of authority and bureaucracy for the size of the Campus. Curtin should explore ways to simplify the

governance and management system. As Curtin is moving to an offshore campus model, more formal reporting to University structures besides to individual officers (for example, the DVC (International) or the DVC (Academic), may ensure greater synergy and value-add to the Campus and to the University.

Management and governors are keenly aware of the Curtin University of Technology and Sarawak-based strategies, which include the context of the Malaysian competitive educational environment and of key risks (for example, staff retention, ensuring growth of student numbers and managing the tensions between growth in enrolments and providing facilities to accommodate them). In support of achieving the Campus goals, there are other initiatives underway, for example, establishing a local international school which would include providing schooling for the children of staff, building links with regional tourism, and pursuing industry collaboration in biotechnology research.

The Panel noted that the 'Operation Plan' uses metrics and targets, notably in the research area and has established a target of 6–8% per annum growth in student numbers. Curtin is encouraged to ensure that the use of metrics and targets equally applies to all sections of the Operation Plan. There is a comprehensive document on risk management which was developed in the last two years. While the risk committee's membership and terms of reference have been completed, the committee has yet to meet.

The Sarawak State Government is satisfied with the working relationship and contribution being made by Curtin, and sees it producing graduates whose skills are aligned with the strategic intent and plan of the State. However, given the potential risks to maintaining and increasing student numbers, the Panel heard from staff, employers and external partners that Curtin consider the establishment of a task force to explore ways to market its courses and explore more pathways into new and existing Curtin courses.

It was reported to the Panel that the dynamics and contact between Curtin academics and Curtin Sarawak academics have changed as teaching visits largely ended in 2004. There is a healthy tension between growing the increasingly autonomous status of the Campus and the desire, evidenced in a recent review, to enhance working relations between the Sarawak and the Bentley Campuses.

The Campus has its own Academic Board which meets four times a year. The Board is represented on the Bentley Academic Board. In terms of academic management, the Panel is satisfied that there is evidence for increased attention to the following: ensuring academic standards and the equivalence of the student experience; entry requirements conform to Curtin policy; ensuring wide external professional accreditation, for example, in the engineering degrees (Australia, Malaysia and the United Kingdom for chemical engineering) and also in accounting; benchmarking with other international universities in the region; student awareness and knowledge of the plagiarism policy and penalties; examples of positive internship experiences, for example, in engineering and design; students awareness of graduate attributes in their units and courses; and differences in pass rates are regularly monitored and interventions made, where necessary. However, the Panel found some inconsistency on whether written feedback was given on formative assessments.

There has been an increase in the range of student services at the Campus and in 2007, the Campus Life unit was established. Students are positive about their student experience. International students indicated that the integration of students from countries other than from Malaysia requires greater attention by Curtin. The Panel noted that there was evidence of

international students helping each other and considered that there could be wider student support, such as through a buddy system.

The Learning and Teaching Unit (LTU) was established in 2007 and provides mainly English language support. Staff and students commented positively on the support provided by the Unit. The Unit will need to consider what indicators and evidence it would need to establish the success of its activities. To improve student success, a mentoring system has been recently introduced where third-year students mentor first-year students.

In terms of English proficiency of students, the Panel heard that some students struggle with technical written English. As noted above, preventative and corrective actions take place through the Learning and Teaching Unit 'alert me now' scheme.

The Panel noted issues raised in 2007 about the lack of operating manuals and large numbers of confusing Service Level Agreements, and the continued use of the student records system, called EMS, where diploma and foundation students do not have their records on Student One. This has implications for planning and ensuring the integrity of data. The Panel heard that the operating manuals have been or are being addressed, and recording student data in Student One is receiving attention. Curtin should consider the use of one standard Service Level Agreement template to be used across the Campus.

The Campus receives research income from government and industry sources. There is comprehensive data on Curtin Sarawak research activity and incentives for research. There are a number of publications in refereed journals. There are regular weekly R&D seminars on Fridays. The Campus has workload accommodation for research activity and regular research workshops are conducted by senior researchers. Active functioning research-related committees are in place. The Panel heard about a proposed biotechnology institute, negotiations for which are underway between Curtin and the Sarawak Government.

There is some evidence of working with industry, but external stakeholders are of the opinion that Curtin could give greater attention to networking and building relationships with business and industry which could enable greater responsiveness in the courses, greater feedback on the quality of graduates and exploring possible contract research.

The Panel heard about significant attention to community engagement at the Campus, for example, the collaboration with local schools, charitable organisations and NGOs. An example was provided of lecturers and students using water rockets as a teaching aid in local schools.

The Panel commends Curtin for its vision in establishing the Curtin Sarawak Campus, the successful development of the Campus and its contribution to the region, the collaborative model, and the measured increase in autonomy which is carefully managed and accredited through professional organisations.

#### **Commendation 10**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the conceptualisation, establishment and successful development of the Curtin Sarawak Campus.**

#### 4.4.2 Curtin Sydney

The Curtin Sydney Campus was started in 2005 as a collaborative campus partnership with Navitas. At the beginning of 2008, Curtin Sydney has about 1000 enrolled students (with about

400 Master of Accounting students and about 600 Bachelor of Commerce and diploma students). Enrolments on this campus are principally international students, with approximately 100 domestic students. The contract with Navitas defines the responsibility of each partner. Curtin retains control over academic matters and monitors academic quality through the Curtin Sydney Academic Board which meets three times annually. As a centrally located city campus, it has adequate infrastructure, for example ICT support and limited student services which are being enhanced progressively. Curtin Sydney uses the Curtin quality assurance system. The Campus is designed for a maximum student load of about 2000.

The Panel heard that management, academic staff and students are positive about the relationship with the Bentley Campus. In some cases, the responsiveness of unit coordinators at Bentley to local staff is slow, and may require closer monitoring.

eVALUate is used at the end of each unit to survey student opinions. There were instances cited by students of it being used, but students said they didn't receive any formal feedback on what is done with their comments, nor do they know about accessing the reports on the units evaluated on the Curtin website. Nevertheless, students reported that Curtin is open and does address poor lecturer performance. The Academic Director monitors lecturer performance and sometimes sits in on lectures if there are student complaints or concerns. The Panel is satisfied that the student feedback system is working, but aspects of it need improvement.

In July 2007, Curtin established a health sciences research presence in cardiovascular and chronic care research at the Sydney Campus. It is not directly related to the other disciplines taught there and the Panel understands that, like Sarawak, it is the University's intention to grow its research infrastructure and support. There is one researcher, two postdoctoral fellows, and about ten PhD and masters students. While this is a start to research on the Campus, greater consideration should be given to sustainability, through the expansion of the research team, or research cluster, or greater use made of visiting scholars, or the development of a multidisciplinary approach.

The Panel had concerns about the reputational risk to Curtin through the Sydney Campus where for some semesters the student pass rates at the diploma and bachelor levels have remained below, and in some cases significantly below, the University's average pass rates. It is not clear to the Panel that there is sufficient understanding of the causes for the academic results and whether it is related to the entry scores, poor language proficiency, or inadequate academic skills. It was reported by students themselves that a significant number of students do not regularly attend classes and that a number of students require English language proficiency assistance. It was not clear how much of the poor student performance could be related to cultural attitudes to learning. Management, academic and support staff were themselves not able to provide the Panel with reasons for the below average results.

Curtin has raised the IELTS score and entry requirements for diploma students wishing to enrol at Curtin Sydney, which is a first step to rectify student academic performance at the diploma and bachelor levels. The Panel is of the opinion that the University needs to continue to address this situation, which has included strengthening the academic support for students (for example all conditional status students are required to attend study skills classes and are limited to a 75% enrolment load to enable this), and providing more specialised assistance in academic support for students from the Bentley Campus.

### **Affirmation 7**

#### **AUQA affirms Curtin's recognition of the low academic performance of Curtin Sydney students and its need to investigate and address the issues.**

Many students choose to study in Australia in order to have an Australian student experience. Providing an 'Australian' student experience is a challenge for a number of Australian universities with a large concentration of international students. Curtin is encouraged to consider the challenges and opportunities for what the student experience means for this international campus in Sydney.

The Panel heard that the formation of a Curtin Sydney student association would occur later in 2008. The Panel is of the opinion that the formation of the Curtin Sydney student association should occur as soon as possible.

#### **4.5 *International Linkages, International Research Partnerships, Consultancies and Training Programs***

An element of the Curtin internationalisation goals is establishing and maintaining research and teaching linkages. International partnerships are intended to:

- build research and development and teaching and learning capabilities;
- enhance the University's profile and reputation within the international community;
- provide opportunities that the University otherwise would not be able to achieve alone; and
- provide students, staff and other key clients with a wider range of experiences. (PF p106)

The University has a developed international research links strategy, supported by the Office of Research and Development, with a focus on a limited number of high-quality partnerships in areas of research strengths. The University has memoranda of understanding with universities, such as the Virginia Commonwealth University, that include staff and student exchange, and collaborative research activities. The strategy with China is the most developed:

- Curtin targets highly ranked research institutions—such as members of the International Strategic Technology Alliance (through the Australian Technology Network);
- Initial contacts are at professor-to-professor level, leading to joint research projects and jointly enrolled HDR students;
- Where possible, Chinese Professors from Curtin are involved in interactions; and
- There is an active program of engagement at the highest levels, directly supported by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development). (PF p107)

The University research budget supports this strategy. Further international research link strategies are under development (for example, India and Russia). An effort is being made to increase the number of international higher degree research students, with CBS targeting a 100 per cent increase.

As noted in section 4.4.1 the Curtin Sarawak Campus enables the development of Curtin's research strengths in applied fields. Currently there are eight externally funded research projects, 30 Curtin Sarawak Research Fund projects and one Curtin Sarawak Collaborative Research project. The Panel established that researchers at the Bentley Campus have active links with the smaller research nodes in Sarawak and Curtin Sydney, and an effort is made to give researchers the opportunity to visit the Bentley Campus.

Curtin staff are involved in a range of international consulting and training programs.

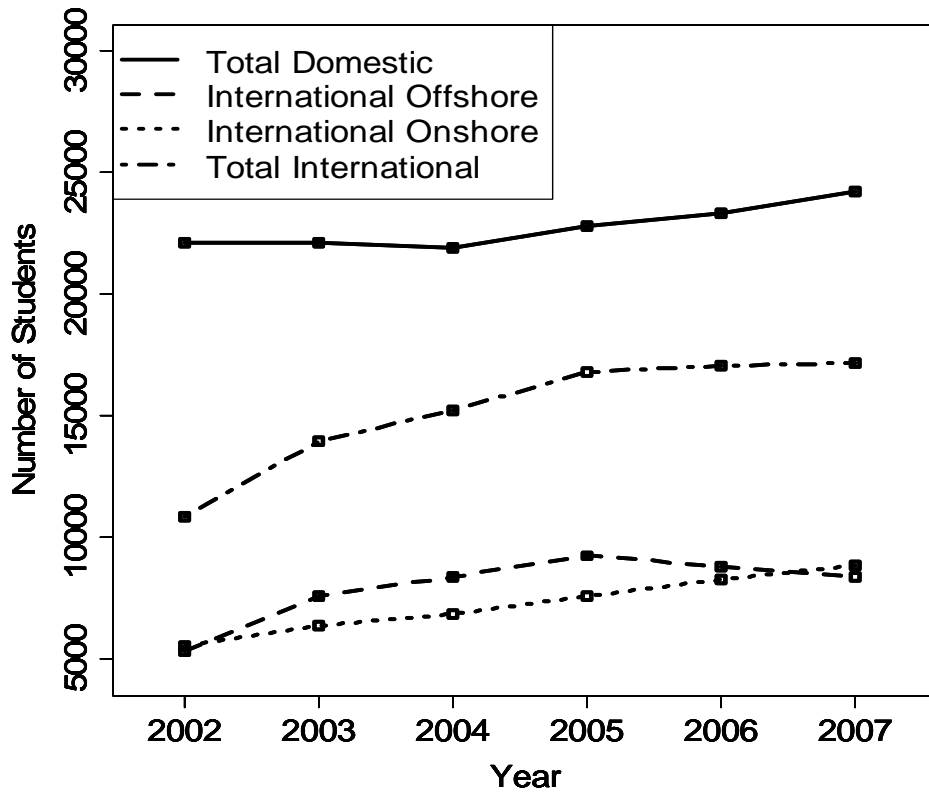
The Panel is of the opinion that Curtin has a well developed research linkages strategy with a number of active projects underway, including a developing research record at Sarawak.

**Commendation 11**

**AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of its internationalisation of research including the developing research record at Curtin Sarawak.**

## 5 DATA

### Item 5.1 Curtin student numbers



	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Total Domestic</b>	22104	22097	21893	22783	23324	24186
<b>International Offshore</b>	5312	7560	8377	9226	8768	8353
<b>International Onshore</b>	5502	6375	6846	7553	8269	8809
<b>Total International</b>	10814	13935	15223	16779	17037	17162

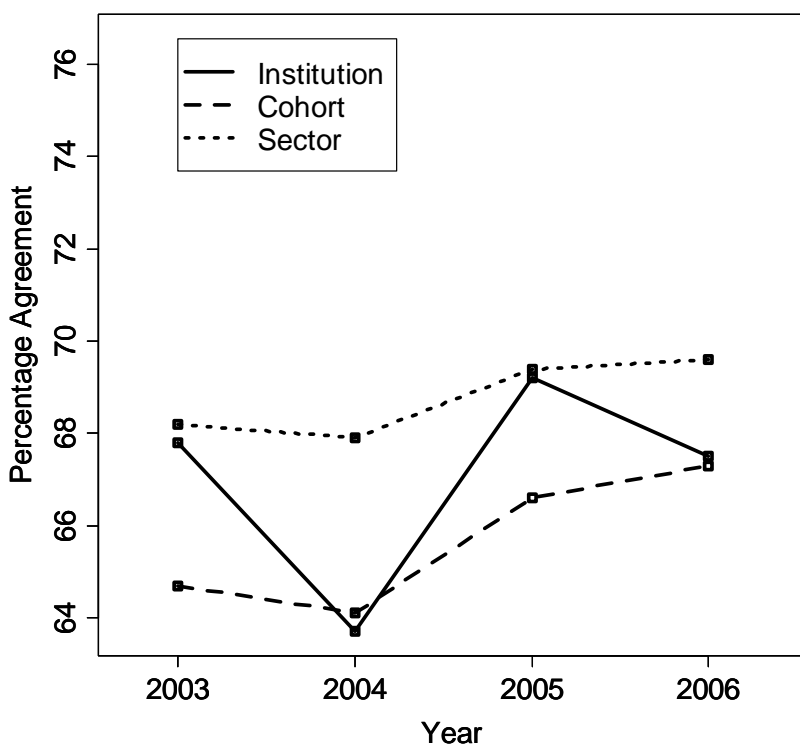
Source: Curtin Performance Portfolio, Figure 1.1, p15

**Item 5.2 Curtin outcomes 2008 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund adjusted percentages: (performance against ATN cohort in brackets)**

	<b>Discipline Group 1:</b> Science, Computing, Eng., Arch., Agric.	<b>Discipline Group 2:</b> Business, Law and Economics	<b>Discipline Group 3:</b> Humanities, Arts and Education	<b>Discipline Group 4:</b> Health
	N = 38 (5)	N = 37 (5)	N = 37 (5)	N = 33 (5)
Full-time Employment	<b>19</b> (3)	<b>28</b> (4)	<b>5</b> (2)	<b>23</b> (4)
Further Full-time or Part-time Study	<b>37</b> (5)	<b>33</b> (5)	<b>30</b> (5)	<b>28</b> (5)
Progress Rate	<b>9</b> (2)	<b>21</b> (3)	<b>22</b> (3)	<b>21</b> (4)
Retention Rate	<b>13</b> (2)	<b>5</b> (2)	<b>29</b> (5)	<b>21</b> (5)

Source: DEEWR.

**Item 5.3 Curtin Overall Satisfaction percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06**

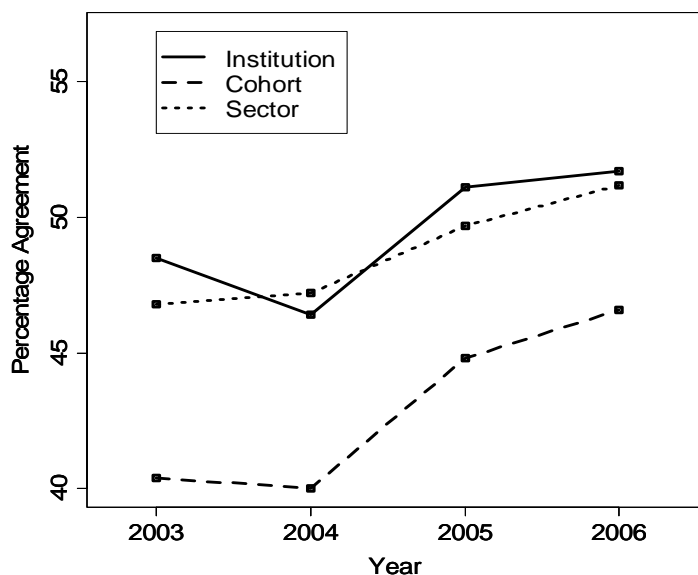


Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of the Curtin University of Technology 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.4 Curtin Overall Satisfaction 2006 by broad field of education**

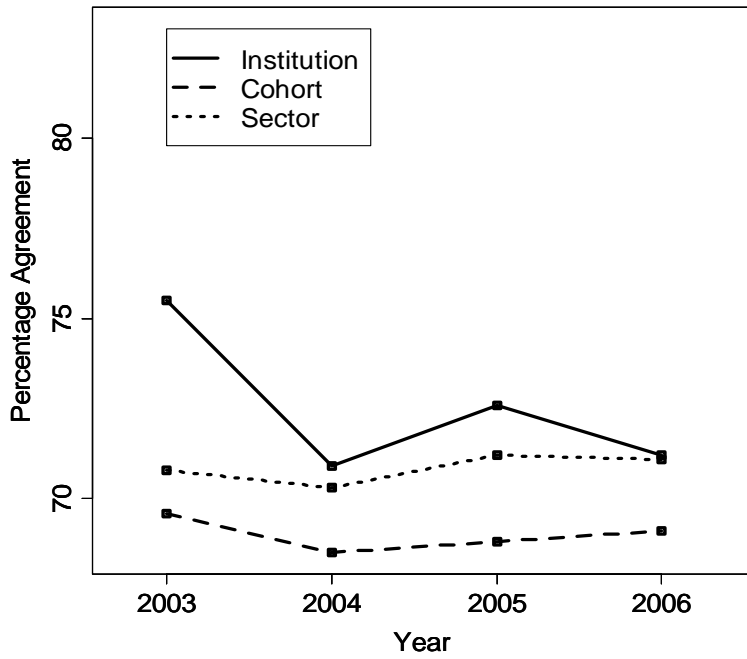
	Institution	Cohort	Sector
Natural & Physical Sciences	73.2	77.7	76.3
Information Technology	62.1	62.9	63.3
Engineering & Related	69.2	62.1	65.5
Architecture & Building	64.5	58.3	59.0
Agriculture, Environmental & Related	54.3	69.6	75.3
Health (excluding Nursing)	66.6	71.1	71.9
Nursing	54.2	55.9	58.8
Education	72.8	64.2	64.0
Management & Commerce	67.8	68.2	68.4
Society & Culture	77.3	74.4	76.0
Creative Arts	60.8	66.1	66.2

Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of the Curtin University of Technology 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.5 Curtin Good Teaching Scale percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06**

Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of the Curtin University of Technology 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.6 Curtin Generic Skill Scale percentage agreement, compared with sector and cohort 2003–06**



Source: Data taken from the quality outcomes section of the Curtin University of Technology 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

**Item 5.7 Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction survey results – course experience 2004–06**

	Response	2004	2005	2006
		%	%	%
<b>Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my course.</b>	Agree	77	78	79
	Neither	13	13	12
	Disagree	10	9	9
<b>The teaching staff in my course motivate me to do my best work.</b>	Agree	58	60	63
	Neither	26	24	21
	Disagree	16	16	16
<b>Staff put a real effort into understanding difficulties I might have with my work.</b>	Agree	56	58	60
	Neither	27	26	23
	Disagree	18	16	16
<b>The teaching staff give me helpful feedback on how I am going.</b>	Agree	50	53	55
	Neither	27	26	24
	Disagree	23	21	21
<b>My lecturers are good at explaining things.</b>	Agree	65	67	68
	Neither	22	20	20
	Disagree	13	13	13
<b>The teaching staff work hard to make their subjects interesting.</b>	Agree	60	64	65
	Neither	25	22	22
	Disagree	15	14	13
<b>Teaching staff are helpful to students with language and learning difficulties.</b>	Agree	39	42	52
	Neither	51	48	34
	Disagree	10	10	13

Source: Curtin Performance Portfolio, Table 2.2, p41.

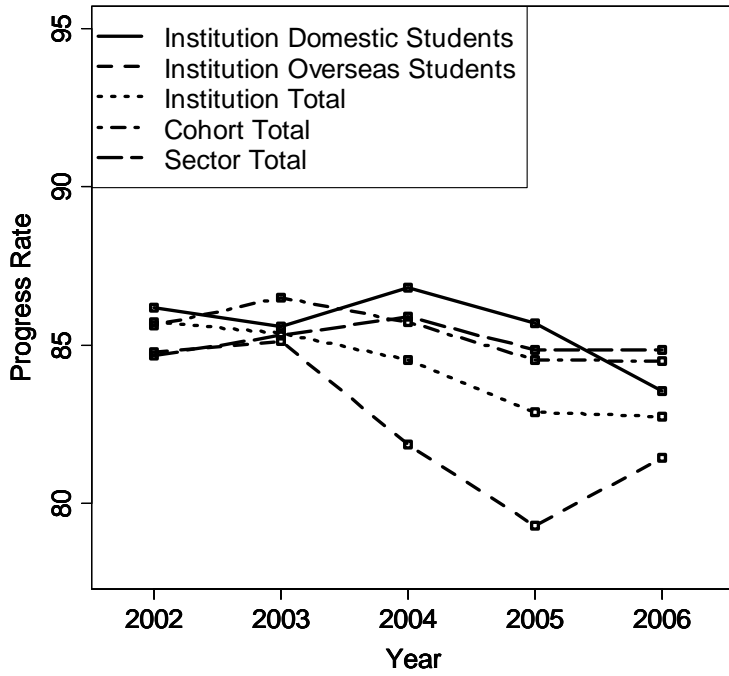
**Item 5.8 Curtin eVALUate results – Semester 2, 2005 to Semester 2, 2007**

		What helps achievement of the learning outcomes						Student motivation and engagement			Satisfaction	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Outcomes	Experiences	Resources	Assessment	Feedback	Workload	Teaching	Motivation	Best use	Think about	Satisfaction
% Agree	<b>S2 05</b>	82.9	79.2	77.8	78.4	67.2	78.9	74.7	75.6	80.1	77.2	75.9
	<b>S1 06</b>	84.8	80.6	80.4	80.2	70.1	80.7	77.2	78	80	77.9	78.1
	<b>S2 06</b>	85	81.2	80.1	80.1	70.8	81.3	78	81.6	82.2	80.3	79.9
	<b>S1 07</b>	85.9	82.4	81.3	81.3	72.9	82.4	80	82.5	82.2	81	81.4
	<b>S2 07</b>	86.1	82.3	81.5	81.8	74	83	80.3	83.1	83.8	82.4	81.4

Note: Dark grey highlights relate to items below the University agreed target of 80% satisfaction.

Source: Curtin Performance Portfolio, Figure 2.4, p42

**Item 5.9 Curtin progress rates by category, compared with the sector and cohort 2002–06**



Source: Attrition and progress for commencing bachelor students from the Curtin University of Technology 2007 Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: THE AUDIT PROCESS

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

One of two themes proposed by Curtin, 'Ensuring the Quality of the Student Experience', was selected by AUQA given the importance of Curtin's commitment through its current strategic priorities to its core business of teaching and learning. Other reasons for the selection of the theme were linked to ways the 'Student Experience' is consistently achieved across the University's multiple teaching locations and modes, and a number of teaching and learning related recommendations from the 2002 AUQA Audit Report (eg Recommendations 3, 7–8, 10–11, 16).

A second theme 'Internationalisation' was pre-selected by AUQA for most 2008 audits. It was chosen as Curtin has 'Internationalisation' as one of four key themes in the University's Strategic Plan (2006–2008), including its international staff profile, research collaborations and large onshore and offshore student enrolments.

The Audit Panel also selected recommendations on planning, human resources and research training for follow-up. The first set of recommendations included the integration and simplification of planning, quality assurance and resource allocation processes (recommendations 3, 5, 7, 8). A second group of recommendations investigated dealt with the performance review system and leadership training (recommendations 10-11). Lastly, the Panel looked at research supervisor registration and training (recommendation 16).

On 11 July 2008, Curtin University of Technology presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, including supporting materials. The Audit Panel met on 28 July 2008 to consider these materials.

The Audit Panel Chair and Audit Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to the University on 1 September 2008. During that visit, the answers to questions and additional information requested by the Panel were discussed, as well as the Audit Visit program and visits to other campuses and partners. Curtin provided further documentation at the Panel's request.

Between 9 September and 2 October members of the Audit Panel visited 11 locations (including Curtin campuses, partner institutions and a Western Australia regional centre) (see table below). A written report of these activities was circulated to the full Audit Panel prior to the main Audit Visit. The main Audit Visit to the Bentley Campus was conducted during the period 13–16 October 2008.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Institution</b>
9 September	Mauritius	1) Charles Telfair Institute
11 September	Malaysia	2) Metropolitan College
12 September	Malaysia	3) Limkokwing University
18–19 September	Sarawak, Malaysia	4) Curtin Sarawak Campus
22 September	Hong Kong	5) HKU Space and HKU Space — Centre for International Degree Programs
23 September	Hong Kong	6) Open University HK
25 September	Singapore	7) Marketing Institute of Singapore
26 September	Singapore	8) CSM Academy International
30 September	Sydney, Australia	9) Curtin Sydney Campus
2 October	Western Australia	10) Kalgoorlie Centre

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with around 660 people in the course of the audit, including the Vice-Chancellor, the Chancellor, senior management, academic and general staff, external stakeholders, undergraduate and postgraduate students, (including external, Indigenous, regional and international students) and partners. Open sessions were available for any member of the University community to meet the Audit Panel or make a submission to the Panel and four people took advantage of this opportunity.

AUQA expresses its appreciation to Professor Jane den Hollander, Mr Bernie McKenna and others at Curtin for their professional and friendly assistance, and for the organisation throughout the audit process, particularly the offshore and onshore visits prior to the Audit Visit. AUQA also thanks the University for its ready production of additional information and for granting the Panel secure access to its intranet for the period of the audit.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 16 October 2008, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by Curtin as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation.

While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the University's activities within the scope of the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings. To keep the audit within manageable limits, the Panel did not visit all the offshore partners.

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

### Mission

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

### Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

## Vision

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

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

## Values

AUQA will be:

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

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

## **APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL**

Prof John Davies, Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies, Anglia Ruskin University, England

Professor Dean Forbes, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International), Flinders University

Dr Mark Hay, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Dr Sandra Welsman, Principal and Director, Frontiers Insight Pty Ltd, Armidale

Professor Hilary Winchester, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice President: Strategy and Planning, University of South Australia (Chair)

Observer:

Mr Vivek Gupta Ramnarain, Acting Head: Quality Assurance and Accreditation Division, Tertiary Education Commission, Mauritius

## APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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

AEI.....	Australian Education International
ATN .....	Australian Technology Network
AUQA .....	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AUSSE .....	Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
AVCC .....	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CASS.....	Curtin Annual Student Satisfaction
CBD .....	Central Business District
CBS.....	Curtin Business School
CBSi.....	Curtin Business School International
CCTV.....	closed circuit television
CEQ .....	Course Experience Questionnaire
CRE.....	Centre for Regional Education
Curtin .....	Curtin University of Technology
Cwth.....	Commonwealth
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DVC .....	deputy vice-chancellor
EFTSL.....	equivalent full-time student load
ESOS Act .....	<i>Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000</i>
GA .....	graduate attribute
HDR.....	higher degree by research
HKU.....	Hong Kong University
IAF.....	Institution Assessment Framework
ICT.....	Information and Communications Technology
IELTS.....	International English Language Testing System
ISO .....	International Organization for Standardization
KPIs .....	key performance indicators
MCEETYA .....	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
National Protocols .....	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes
NGOs.....	non government organisations
OASIS .....	Online Access to Student Information Services
PF p .....	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
Protocols.....	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

- PVC .....pro vice-chancellor
- R&D .....research and development
- RPL .....Recognised Prior Learning
- Student One .....Curtin Student Record System
- TER.....Tertiary Entrance Ranking
- WA .....Western Australia
- WAIT .....Western Australian Institute of Technology
- WASM.....Western Australia School of Mines
- WPPR .....Work Planning and Performance Review
- VTEC.....Vocational Training and Education Centre



