

AUSTRALIAN
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Report of an Audit of
Deakin University

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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2003, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of Deakin University.

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

The Audit Process

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

In late June 2004, Deakin University presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, along with a number of supporting documents. The University also very helpfully provided for Panel access to its intranet. The Audit Panel met on 12 August to consider these materials. As a result of this meeting, the Panel identified a number of questions of clarification and some additional documentation to request of the University.

The Audit Panel Chair and Audit Director undertook a Preparatory Visit to the University's Waurn Ponds Geelong campus on 20 August. This allowed the Panel to obtain clarification of issues, to discuss its requests for the provision of further documentary evidence, and to make arrangements for the Panel's site visits.

The Audit Panel Chair and Audit Director undertook a visit to the Warrnambool campus on 1 October and met with a range of staff, students and external stakeholders. Approximately 60 people were interviewed during that day. One session was available for any member of the campus community to meet the Audit Panel and two people took advantage of this opportunity. A written report of these activities was prepared and circulated to the full Audit Panel for its consideration prior to the main site visit to ensure that the results could be considered as part of the Panel's overall deliberations.

The Audit Visit took place over 18-21 October 2004, with the Panel spending one day each at the Geelong Waterfront and Waurn Ponds campuses and two days at the Burwood campus. In all, the Audit Panel spoke with approximately 300 people during this Visit, including the Chancellor and some external members of the University Council, the Vice-Chancellor and senior management, academic staff, general and technical staff, representatives of staff unions, undergraduate and postgraduate students, student representatives and members of the external community. A number of people were interviewed using teleconference facilities. Sessions were also available for any member of Deakin University's community to meet the Audit Panel and a number of people took advantage of this opportunity. During sessions on both the Warrnambool and Waurn Ponds campuses, Panel members walked around the campuses and spoke to staff and students at random about various aspects of their experiences at Deakin.

AUQA appreciated the highly professional support provided to the Panel by the University, both before and during the Panel's various visits. The University handled the provision of additional materials requested by the Panel very efficiently and effectively which greatly aided the Panel in its work.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 21 October 2004 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by Deakin University as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of Deakin University's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

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

The Audit Panel has structured this Report to reflect the structure of the University's Performance Portfolio.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Introduction to Findings

Following the appointment of the current Vice-Chancellor at the beginning of 2003, the University has experienced a significant amount of change in virtually every area of operations. While the scale and pace of this change have been considerable, it was evident to the Panel that there is acceptance amongst most staff of the need for many of these changes and a belief that the changes are taking Deakin in an appropriate direction for the future. The majority of staff and students based at the University's most geographically remote campus, Warrnambool, feel well integrated into the fabric of the University although ensuring that this remains so will require ongoing effort from all staff. There is further scope to explore innovative technologies that may reduce the amount of time staff spend travelling between campuses.

With the adoption of its new planning and review framework, the University has made a commitment to continuous quality improvement and good progress has been made in embedding this approach. AUQA commends Deakin University for the implementation of an integrated planning and budget model that serves as a comprehensive quality framework and ensures that strategic priorities and operational targets are addressed at every level of the organisation.

In respect of governance, it is evident that the senior executive and Council have established a sound working relationship. Since 2003, the Council and senior management have been working to improve the University's ability to manage risk effectively and AUQA affirms the University's ongoing work in this area. The Academic Board was reviewed in March 2003 which resulted in an extensive reshaping of its terms of reference, constitution and sub-committee structure. The review is beginning to have positive effects on the ability of the Academic Board to fulfil its obligations in the effective governance of academic activities within the University. In the Panel's view, the Board's sub-committees are not yet operating as effectively as they should and AUQA recommends that the Academic Board ensure that the Chairs and members of its committees are assisted in developing an improved understanding of their important quality assurance roles. Some additional work is also recommended on streamlining the University's policy framework. Staff and students alike comment on the friendly and welcoming environment the University offers. Students feel that staff are, in general, approachable, and willing to assist and support them. This is evident not only at the University's smaller campuses but also at the Burwood campus where the majority of students are based.

Deakin has a fine tradition of distance education, which was originally based on the distribution of printed materials to students. From 2004, all units are required to have a basic online presence which involves provision of at least some resources online and online communication with students. AUQA affirms Deakin University's recognition of the need to reshape organisational structures for the support of teaching and learning so that they can better position the University to respond to the pedagogical implications of its move toward use of online technology. AUQA commends Deakin University for its support of the Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program which is an innovative and successful strategy for supporting those staff with an interest in further extending their use of online technologies in their teaching. Also in the area of teaching and learning, the Report discusses aspects of the University's assessment and teaching and unit evaluation policies. The Panel endorses the University's intention to develop further its systems in these areas and makes some recommendations in this regard.

In 2003 and 2004 the University initiated several reviews of its off-shore teaching partnerships; the most comprehensive of which was completed in March 2004. Deakin is to be congratulated for undertaking this review; for including such a frank report in its Performance Portfolio; and for the convincing way in which it has begun to address the identified problems. AUQA affirms Deakin University's action plan to address the various quality improvements needed in its management and quality assurance of off-shore teaching partnerships.

Deakin has put considerable effort and resources into mechanisms to improve communication with students. Two major strategies for communication with students are not working as effectively as the University might expect. AUQA recommends that in reviewing the Student Portal and Learning Toolkit, Deakin University ensure that it consults extensively with students to ensure that their patterns of need and usage, as well as the limitations on personal computing equipment are fully recognised and accommodated.

In the early years of the University, relatively little emphasis was placed on research but this has changed more recently. Council Performance Indicators for research are research income; number of publications weighted per full-time effective academic staff; and the percentage of research active staff. All three measures have been significantly increasing in recent years, from a relatively low base and AUQA specifically commends the University for this. AUQA also commends Deakin University for the establishment of Research Priority Areas which are successfully providing a stimulus for the development of research networks across the University and partnerships with external organisations and recommends that the University consider improved mechanisms for involving, as a group, the Heads of Research Priority Areas in strategic planning for research. Support for early career researchers is critically important as the University moves to expand its research profile. AUQA commends Deakin University for its two-day intensive workshop for early career researchers which are highly valued by staff and which facilitate their first research grant applications. The University has also recognised the need to increase the number of its staff with doctoral qualifications and the Panel encourages the University's efforts in this regard.

To assist the University to achieve the objectives of its research training program, AUQA recommends that the University implement an ongoing training program for higher degree by research (HDR) supervisors at all levels of experience and draw on resources available from external sources. Recommendations are also made in relation to strengthening the annual progress report system for HDR students; clarifying processes for the analysis and response to HDR student surveys and progress reports; and extending the range of skills development workshops available to HDR students studying on- and off-campus. The University offers a number of professional doctorate programs, which the University states are equivalent in academic standard to its PhD. The University's approach to assuring this is limited and AUQA recommends that Deakin University undertake a review of the place, scope and pedagogy of its professional doctorates in relation to the PhD, and that the review include appropriate external input.

A commitment to 'rural and regional engagement' is one of three core commitments identified by the University in 2003. Staff at Deakin make positive formal and informal contributions to community life. AUQA commends Deakin University for its strategy to link with, and serve, the needs of its rural and regional communities. The establishment in 2003 of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) position is regarded by members of the University's regional communities as a tangible signal of the University's commitment to sustain its rural and regional character. AUQA affirms Deakin University's intention to review the operation and effectiveness of its Community Reference Groups for South Western and South Central Victoria. Another of the three core commitments identified by the University in 2003 is "equity and access for individuals and groups who might not otherwise enjoy the benefits that flow from participating in higher education". AUQA commends the University for its manifest commitment to equity and access which allows individuals and groups who might otherwise not be able to participate in higher education to do so. AUQA also commends Deakin University's Institute of Koorie Education for the community-based learning model that is successfully providing Indigenous students with access to higher education.

With respect to human resource management, the University intends to investigate improved induction processes for academic staff in faculties to ensure a more systematic process is used for all staff, including sessional and casual staff and the Panel endorses this intention. Induction of new staff occurs through both centrally and locally provided programs. A new development in 2004 has been the launch of the excellent online Induction Program, which takes a ‘just in time’ approach to providing the large amount of information new staff must become familiar with. The Panel encourages the University to continue close monitoring of the program’s effectiveness. There was a consensus amongst the staff met by the Panel that the University provides a relevant program of staff development and that there is generally good support for staff to undertake development activities as required, which was described by some staff as a ‘culture for opportunity’. Staff met by the Audit Panel are generally very positive about the working environment provided by the University. The University has commissioned a staff satisfaction survey every two years since 1998. The preliminary analysis of the 2004 results shows that ratings of satisfaction have improved over the 2002 survey results in all areas.

AUQA commends the University for the implementation of the Performance Planning and Review process which is a useful and valued tool in performance management and individual career planning. This is well embedded throughout the University, particularly so with general staff for whom it has been applied longer. Workload remains a major issue for staff, particularly those establishing a research career. Each faculty has developed its own workload model, many of which are very complex. However, they are used more as counting devices than as workload management tools. Additional effort is required to ensure that workload is distributed equitably to ensure that Deakin can support staff in the range of activities required of them.

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

Commendations

The following are areas where AUQA commends the practices of Deakin University.

1. AUQA commends Deakin University for the implementation of an integrated planning and budget model that serves as a comprehensive quality framework and ensures that strategic priorities and operational targets are addressed at every level of the organisation. 11
2. AUQA commends Deakin University for its support of the Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program which is an innovative and successful strategy for supporting those staff with an interest in further extending the use of online technologies in their teaching. 22
3. AUQA commends Deakin University for the establishment of Research Priority Areas which are successfully providing a stimulus for the development of research networks across the University and partnerships with external organisations. 24
4. AUQA commends Deakin University for its two-day intensive workshop for early career researchers which are highly valued by staff and which facilitate their first research grant applications. 25
5. AUQA commends Deakin University for the significant improvement of a number of research performance measures in recent years. 25
6. AUQA commends Deakin University for its strategy to link with, and serve, the needs of its rural and regional communities. 34
7. AUQA commends Deakin University for its manifest commitment to equity and access which allows individuals and groups who might otherwise not be able to participate in higher education to do so. 35

8.	AUQA commends Deakin University’s Institute of Koorie Education for the community-based learning model that is successfully providing Indigenous students with access to higher education.	35
9.	AUQA commends Deakin University for the implementation of the Performance Planning and Review process which is a useful and valued tool in performance management and individual career planning.	39

Affirmations

The following are areas where AUQA affirms the improvement needs identified by Deakin University.

1.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s recognition of the need to implement a systematic approach to the effective use of external comparisons across its range of activities.	10
2.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s ongoing important work to strengthen its capacity to manage risk effectively.	14
3.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s intention to review outcomes from the review of Academic Board to ensure that it is effectively fulfilling its functions as the principal academic authority within the University.	14
4.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s recognition of the need to reshape organisational structures for the support of teaching and learning so that they can better position the University to respond to the pedagogical implications of its move toward use of online technology.	21
5.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s action plan to address the various quality improvements needed in its management and quality assurance of off-shore teaching partnerships.	31
6.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s intention to review the operation and effectiveness of its Community Reference Groups for South Western and South Central Victoria.	34
7.	AUQA affirms Deakin University’s recognition of alumni as an important community group with which it could develop stronger links.	36

Recommendations

The following are areas where AUQA recommends improvements to the practices of Deakin University.

1.	AUQA recommends that Deakin University explore the latest technology to enhance links across its five campuses, thus reducing the need for staff to spend as much time travelling as they do.	9
2.	AUQA recommends that the Deakin University Academic Board ensure that the Chairs and members of its committees are assisted in developing an improved understanding of their important quality assurance roles.	15
3.	AUQA recommends that Deakin University consider unification of rules or guidelines for implementation of University policies that acknowledges and allows for contextual differences.	16
4.	AUQA recommends that Deakin University communicate to students more effectively the nature and aims of the Deakin Advantage and assist them to document the discipline-specific and generic skills they are developing throughout their course.	19

5. AUQA recommends that Deakin University harmonise its approach to the comparability of assessment such that one set of agreed principles can be applied consistently across the University.....19
6. AUQA recommends that Deakin University extend the scope of its foreshadowed review of the system of student evaluation of teaching and units to include all aspects of its implementation and follow-up.20
7. AUQA recommends that in reviewing the Student Portal and Learning Toolkit, Deakin University ensure that it consults extensively with students to ensure that their patterns of need and usage, as well as the limitations on personal computing equipment are fully recognised and accommodated.22
8. AUQA recommends that Deakin University consider improved mechanisms for involving, as a group, the Heads of Research Priority Areas in strategic planning for research.....24
9. AUQA recommends that Deakin University clarify the role of the Higher Degrees by Research sub-committee in the oversight and effective follow-up of research degree reviews.27
10. AUQA recommends that Deakin University implement an ongoing training program for higher degree by research supervisors at all levels of experience and draw on resources available from external sources.....27
11. AUQA recommends that Deakin University's processes for the analysis and response to surveys of higher degree by research students and annual progress reports be clearly outlined within a framework of accountability for action on issues that arise and that the Higher Degrees by Research sub-committee's role in overseeing the use of this information for continuous quality improvement be addressed.28
12. AUQA recommends that Deakin University extend the range of skills development workshops available to higher degree by research students and provide them to both on- and off-campus students using appropriate technologies.28
13. AUQA recommends that Deakin University undertake a review of the place, scope and pedagogy of its professional doctorates in relation to the PhD, and that the review include appropriate external input.29

1 ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 *Context for Audit*

Deakin was originally established in 1974 as a University 'in the Geelong area'. Mergers in 1990 with the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education and in 1991 with Victoria College have resulted in Deakin University operating across five campuses situated in Geelong, Warrnambool and Melbourne cities.

Following the appointment of the current Vice-Chancellor, the University has experienced a significant amount of change in virtually every area of operations. While the scale and pace of this change have been considerable, it was evident to the Panel that there is acceptance amongst most staff of the need for many of these changes and a belief that the changes are taking Deakin in an appropriate direction for the future. Staff morale, overall, appears to be relatively strong and improving.

Staff and students alike comment on the friendly and welcoming environment the University offers. Students feel that staff are, in general, approachable, and willing to assist and support them. This is evident not only at the University's smaller campuses but also at the Burwood campus where the majority of students are based.

The mission statement is that "Deakin University's teaching and learning, its research, its partnerships and its international programs, will be relevant, innovative and responsive. Deakin will be recognised as Australia's most progressive university". In 2003, the University identified three core commitments:

- rural and regional engagement;
- continuing education and life-long learning; and
- equity and access for individuals and groups who might not otherwise enjoy the benefits that flow from participating in higher education.

The Panel acknowledges the aspirational intent of the concluding sentence of the mission statement that "Deakin will be recognised as Australia's most progressive university" and notes that the University considers that if Deakin achieves the goals and strategies in its Strategic Plan, it will be recognised as Australia's most progressive. The University therefore defines 'progressive' in terms of constantly advancing as a relevant, innovative and responsive institution. In its discussions with staff, the Panel noted that while reference to relevance, innovation and responsiveness were often made, knowledge of the aspiration to be recognised as the country's most progressive university was less evident. Also, the agreed set of indicators by which Council monitors performance do not track performance at this level (see section 2.1).

1.1.1 Working Across Multiple Campuses

Deakin University is not alone amongst Australian universities in having to respond to the challenges of working across multiple locations. The University has to a large extent been successful in minimising the negative effects that this environment can bring. The majority of staff and students based at the University's most geographically remote campus, Warrnambool, feel well integrated into the fabric of the University although ensuring that this remains so will require ongoing effort from all staff. Some Warrnambool-based staff point to instances of University policies that are not appropriate for the Warrnambool environment and occasions where being 'out of sight' of their colleagues at Geelong and Burwood has meant that they are left out of the communication loop. Likewise, some Warrnambool students report instances of a

lack of consultation or opportunity to participate in University events such as the Southern University Games.

The distance between the five campuses and the University's desire to provide equivalent student experiences means that many staff are involved in a considerable amount of travel. Given the importance the University places on innovation, there is further scope to explore innovative technologies to address this matter.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that Deakin University explore the latest technology to enhance links across its five campuses, thus reducing the need for staff to spend as much time travelling as they do.

Working across multiple locations introduces particular issues relating to academic quality assurance, which the Panel discusses later in this Report (see section 3.4.1).

1.2 *Organisational and Quality Assurance Leadership*

With the adoption of its new planning and review framework (see section 1.3), the University has made a commitment to continuous quality improvement and good progress has been made in embedding this approach.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee advises the Vice-Chancellor on the integration of continuous improvement. Its membership draws representatives from academic and service divisions across the University. The Committee is involved in advising on a range of issues connected with quality assurance and improvement.

As at most Australian universities, Deakin undertakes a number of surveys of its stakeholders (staff, students and external) to measure satisfaction with the services being provided, and a number of additional surveys were being piloted or were planned at the time of the audit. The University is currently constructing a University Survey Framework Policy which is intended to provide a set of guiding principles for all Deakin surveys and will require survey developers to outline a survey's aims, address matters of validity and measurement, and identify how it is intended to report on and provide feedback from the survey. This should provide a useful framework to help ensure that the benefits from surveys are maximised and that actions occur as a result of what is learnt.

1.2.1 Review Systems

Faculties are reviewed every five years. The Panel selected two faculty reviews and requested copies of the review panel reports and associated follow-up documentation. In both instances, the review had identified a number of recommended areas for improvement. The review report and each faculty's formal response to the review's recommendations were considered by Academic Board and the Vice-Chancellor's response to the review, in each case accepting all recommendations, was also considered by the Board. The subsequent year's annual report from each faculty gives an account of the actions taken in response to the review and it appeared to the Panel that this gave a sufficient account of implementation status for satisfactory monitoring.

In March 2004 a revised policy on faculty reviews was approved. This extended the terms of reference for these reviews to include an assessment of a faculty's contribution to the University's Strategic Plan and also changed the nature of follow-up of review recommendations, such that each faculty is now required to "incorporate recommendations and improvement opportunities in its re-planning and Operational Plan ... and report on their implementation in Performance Review, Planning and Evaluation Reports" (Faculty Review Policy, March 2004).

This is a sensible change now that the Performance Review, Evaluation and Planning (PREP) process (see section 1.3) is in place.

The policy on reviews notes that external reviews of schools and discipline areas are conducted as needed. One of the revised terms of reference of faculty reviews is to provide advice on the need for such reviews within a faculty or suggest an earlier than scheduled re-accreditation of courses.

The Planning and Resources Committee (see section 2.3) is the key advisory body to the Vice-Chancellor on matters linking planning and resourcing decisions and policy. It has recently been considering policy on the review of non-academic organisational units (see section 9.1).

1.2.2 External Comparators

The University has recognised that implementing a systematic approach to benchmarking is one area requiring improvement and the Panel agrees. This is not to imply that the University does not undertake comparisons with external organisations; for example, the Performance Portfolio makes reference to comparisons with other Victorian universities in a number of areas and gives some comparative national data in places.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee has developed a 'Framework for Benchmarking in Teaching and Learning and Research and Research Training' which proposes a definition for benchmarking and sets out some guiding principles for how, and with whom, benchmarking activity may be pursued. This is a helpful starting point and the University has committed itself to implementing this in 2005. The Panel believes that it will be important to include benchmarking partners engaged in distance education, rather than just selecting on geographic considerations.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms Deakin University's recognition of the need to implement a systematic approach to the effective use of external comparisons across its range of activities.

A specific example of this is the University's recognition of the need to establish and implement protocols for the benchmarking of research performance, an intention which the Panel endorses (see section 4.4).

1.3 *Performance Review, Evaluation and Planning*

In 2003, the Vice-Chancellor initiated a series of planning conferences with members of the University community. As part of this exercise, the University's mission was reaffirmed and the three core commitments mentioned above (see section 1.1) were identified. Another outcome was the development of a new annual planning and budgetary framework. The planning framework includes University-level strategic and operational planning, and operational planning at faculty and divisional level.

The University's Strategic Plan details Deakin's strategic priorities for the coming five years across seven areas: teaching and learning; research and research training; internationalisation; recruiting and retaining staff; community responsibilities: rural and regional engagement; communication, marketing and 'positioning'; and resources, infrastructure and services. The current Plan, 'Taking Deakin University Forward', was approved by Council in April 2003. The University's Operational Plan identifies annual priorities related to the Strategic Plan goals.

Functional Area Plans are in place or being developed to cover major areas of emphasis. Most cover a three year period; although the Internationalisation Functional Area Plan and the draft Human Resources Functional Area Plan are for four years. The Functional Area Plans have a

different character from one another. All of them identify objectives and strategies to be pursued, although not all identify who will be accountable for action. In various forms they all also include information on performance and on future targets.

From these various University planning documents, faculties and other organisational areas construct their own operational plans annually. It appeared to the Panel that faculties based their plans mostly on the University's Strategic and Operational Plans, rather than the Functional Area Plans. This is possibly because the former two plans are much clearer in identifying short- to medium-term priorities than are some of the Functional Area Plans. Faculty Operational Plans and the associated Performance Review, Evaluation and re-Planning (PREP) reports where progress against Operational Plan targets is reported provide a good framework for monitoring achievements.

Academic schools and divisions may also develop Action or Work Plans to identify how their activities will contribute to the achievement of higher-level goals. Their preparation is not mandatory, although the University is considering changing this. This move may bring added benefit in allowing the University to ensure all areas within Deakin are maximising their contribution to the University's goals, although faculty-level operational planning and reporting when undertaken comprehensively allows this to be identified. The Panel suggests that the University maintain a watching brief on this issue and only formally introduce the Action or Work Plans where it is determined that they will contribute positively to the University's planning processes, and following appropriate consultation with heads of schools and divisions.

The University's continuous quality improvement cycle links strategic and operational planning, with performance review and evaluation. This occurs through mid- and end-of-year reports against operational plan targets. The PREP reports give an account of performance against plan and serve as the basis for the definition of new targets. Council monitors progress against the strategic priorities through the Council Performance Indicators (CPI) Report (see section 2.1).

The Vice-Chancellor is to be congratulated for the obvious personal and professional effort she has put into the creation of this planning process, which has provided the University with a comprehensive quality framework. The continuous quality improvement cycle is very clearly described in University documentation and is well understood by the majority of staff met by the Audit Panel. The Panel found evidence of it being successfully applied by senior managers, faculties and some school leaders. The framework has been effective in ensuring that University strategic priorities and operational targets are addressed at every level throughout the organisation. Faculty operational plans relate directly to the University's operational targets, as do the personal work plans of senior and middle managers. Increasingly, the Performance Planning and Review process (see section 8.4) is being used to ensure that all academic and general staff also relate their annual personal goals in a more direct way to University priorities.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends Deakin University for the implementation of an integrated planning and budget model that serves as a comprehensive quality framework and ensures that strategic priorities and operational targets are addressed at every level of the organisation.

Many staff are appreciative of the sense of direction and purpose that the PREP process has delivered for the University and this is, without question, a positive development. Nonetheless few academic or general staff the Panel met felt that they had significant opportunities to have input into these strategic directions. For the time being at least, this is not problematic as there is general agreement with the direction that has been decided. This may not always be the case, however, and care will be needed to ensure that the senior managers of the University find ways of sufficiently involving the general University community in strategic decision-making.

1.4 Communication

The University has a number of different mechanisms for communicating with and facilitating communication amongst staff. The electronic staff portal is used to post messages and news to staff and provides access to a range of different types of information through one access point. Staff met by the Panel varied in the extent to which they use the portal. Those who do not use it regularly report that it can nonetheless be a helpful back-up when they do need to access information. One possibility would be for the staff portal to be the entry path for staff e-mail to ensure that staff are exposed to the portal and current messages.

The Guide is an online interactive database of University legislation, policies and procedures. A consequence of the recent comprehensive changes to the University's operation has been the generation or revision of a large number of policies or practices. The Guide is well designed and the Panel noted the ease of access it gives to information on policy, procedures and University committees. Despite this, the University notes in the Performance Portfolio that the self review "raised a number of issues relating to the usability of The Guide, particularly in identifying new or amended policies" (p.16) and a number of enhancements have already been made. The Panel endorses these changes and encourages the University in the ongoing improvement of the Guide and related communication tools.

Structured opportunities for staff to communicate upwards within the University and engage with high-level decision-making are more limited. Many staff feel that within their work unit or area, there is a good chance to have input but beyond these levels their sense of involvement is more limited. At this stage, most staff do not appear to be overly concerned about this. As noted above, there is generally good support for the direction in which the University is moving and for the clarity that has been produced by the strong definition of this direction. Care will need to be exercised to ensure that there is an appropriate match between the needs of staff to engage in discussion of University directions and the range and frequency of opportunities for providing input. The University has noted as an area for improvement the need to improve communication channels across the University. At the time of the audit, a Communications and Marketing Plan was under development. Consideration of ways of enhancing bottom-up communication and ensuring that the corporate areas of the University can listen to the suggestions and comments of staff should be included in this Plan.

2 UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The current Strategic and Operational Plans contain no specific objectives relating directly to governance functions.

2.1 *Council*

It is evident that the senior executive and Council have established a sound working relationship. Council members have a clear and shared view of their governance responsibilities. A review of Council performance was undertaken in 2002, which led to a number of improvements including to the way in which recommendations on policy revision were presented to Council and the establishment of a Policy Framework (see section 2.4).

As noted above, Council monitors progress against strategic priorities through the Council Performance Indicators (CPI) Report. For each goal of the Strategic Plan, the CPI Report provides details of the University's performance against the goal; commentary on the outcomes and trends to emerge from the data for each indicator and a statement on the action that has or will be taken in response to the outcomes achieved. The 38 CPI were approved by Council in October 2003. They comprise a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators and cover all areas of the Strategic Plan. With the specificity of the indicators, it was not clear how the Council tracks University performance at the more global level, such as the aspiration to be recognised as "Australia's most progressive university" (see section 1.1). Consideration should be given to ways of facilitating Council's ability to make judgments along these lines, with reference to "relevance, innovation and responsiveness".

Since the adoption of the CPI Report in October 2003, Council members feel that they are provided with an appropriate level of information about the progress towards the fulfilment of specific strategic objectives in a timely way. CPI Reports are presented to Council annually in February and are used as input into revision of the University Strategic Plan. The Panel noted instances where Council has used the information presented in CPI Reports to request from management additional information on the performance of particular areas. One instance of this has been the relatively high rates of staff-initiated separation (see section 8.1), about which Council requested a report analysing the reasons and the intended actions.

The Council Manual contains broad contextual information relevant to the operation of the Council, as well as detailing important information such as the functions of the Council, its operating procedures and so on. The Manual is found by members to be particularly useful as they join the Council, but is also a helpful resource after the initial period of induction and for long-standing members.

2.1.1 Risk Management

Since 2003, the Council and senior management have been working to improve the University's ability to manage risk effectively. Changes to the terms of reference of Council's Audit Committee were made in 2002, clarifying its role in supervising internal audit functions and risk management. A University-level Risk Register was established in 2003 and a two-phase compliance program has commenced looking first at the University's compliance with external requirements and University statutes and regulations. Phase two will address compliance with University policy. A sub-committee of the Planning and Resources Committee (see section 2.3) has also been established to review the adequacy of all University risk registers and this work is ongoing.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms Deakin University's ongoing important work to strengthen its capacity to manage risk effectively.

2.2 Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible to Council for ensuring that adequate policies and procedures are in place for the maintenance of academic standards for teaching, assessment and research within the University. In March 2003, Deakin initiated an external review of Academic Board to assess whether the constitution and committee structures of the Board were appropriate to fulfil its functions. The result of the review was an extensive reshaping of the terms of reference and constitution of Academic Board and a new sub-committee structure.

The revised terms of reference have formally established that Academic Board is “responsible to Council for maintaining academic standards in all University programs, with particular emphasis on teaching, assessment, research and research training, and monitoring compliance with its policies” (Role and Responsibilities of the Academic Board Enabling Policy, December 2003). The membership of the Board has also been altered to give greater representation to the professoriate and to Heads of School (now all *ex officio* members) and to establish three officers of the Board – Chair and two Deputy Chairs, elected from the membership.

The revitalisation of the Academic Board was very timely and the Panel supports the University in commissioning this important review. A change of this nature requires a significant cultural shift that will undoubtedly take time to resonate fully throughout the University. Although, as noted below, there is developmental work to be done on certain aspects of the Board's operations, the Audit Panel saw evidence that the review is beginning to have positive effects on the ability of the Academic Board to fulfil its obligations in the effective governance of academic activities within the University. The University notes in its Performance Portfolio that it intends to “review outcomes from the external review of the Academic Board to determine if the Academic Board is taking a key role in the development and monitoring of quality assurance policies regarding academic matters” (p.16).

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms Deakin University's intention to review outcomes from the review of Academic Board to ensure that it is effectively fulfilling its functions as the principal academic authority within the University.

2.2.1 Academic Board Committees

The structure and function of Academic Board's sub-committees were reviewed as part of the Academic Board review described above. The review panel found the Board's committee structure to be cumbersome and limiting, rather than enabling, to the development of an effective Academic Board. Subsequently, an entirely new committee structure has been established. The March 2003 review panel commented that a paradigm shift was required in the manner of operation of the new committees, with a re-focusing of work on matters of academic substance. In the Audit Panel's view, these committees are as yet not operating as effectively as they should and considers that further attention is required to ensure all members have an appropriate level of understanding of their roles and competence in discharging their responsibilities.

A core responsibility of the various committees of the Board is oversight of the quality assurance mechanisms of the University. In discussions with members of the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Research and Research Training Committee and its sub-committee, it was clear to the Panel that further work is required to ensure an understanding of the quality assurance role and the strategies the committees should be implementing to fulfil this responsibility. Whilst

admittedly still adapting to their new roles, most of the committees had been operating for close to a year at the time of the audit and could be expected to be further advanced in developing appropriate *modus operandi*. Some senior staff take the view that the committees simply need more time, but the Panel considers that more assistance from the Academic Board is required to ensure that the necessary change happens. Some form of targeted training of committee Chairs and members may be needed.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that the Deakin University Academic Board ensure that the Chairs and members of its committees are assisted in developing an improved understanding of their important quality assurance roles.

The Panel notes that an annual self-review of some kind is now an expectation of all Academic Board committees and of the Board itself. The Panel endorses this requirement as a tangible expression of the University's commitment to continuous quality improvement.

At the time of the audit, the Board committees and sub-committees were undertaking self-reviews and the Panel requested the summary report of the self-review of the Teaching and Learning Committee. This showed that a written questionnaire had been distributed to all members, asking for comment on the appropriateness of the committee's terms of reference, and composition, membership and operations. While the survey addressed relevant considerations, only five members had responded, which limited the usefulness of the exercise. Some additional assistance is required to aid the Teaching and Learning Committee, and possibly other committees, in their application of self-evaluative techniques and in responding to the results of these reviews.

2.3 Management Structures

The Senior Executive comprises the Vice-Chancellor, two Deputy Vice-Chancellors, three Pro Vice-Chancellors, the Vice-President (Administration), the Chief Executive Officer of DeakinPrime (see section 7.4.2) and the Director of Marketing. Weekly meetings of this group are attended also by the Chair of Academic Board. The Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) is described by Deakin as "the key advisory body to the Vice-Chancellor on matters linking planning and resourcing decisions and policy" (Performance Portfolio, p.11). The PRC comprises the Senior Executive, the Chair and Deputy Chair of Academic Board, the Deans, three Heads of Divisions and two student representatives. Deans were included in the PRC in 2003 and this is regarded by all parties as being a positive development as it allows these senior staff to be more integrally involved in determining resourcing priorities for the University. The student representative positions were also added at this time and their inclusion has also been seen as a positive development.

2.3.1 Student Representation

The University maintains student representative positions on University- and faculty-level committees and boards. Only some of these are Deakin University Students Association (DUSA) representative positions. DUSA offers an induction program for students appointed to committees which is found to be useful by those who attend, although some students do not do so, particularly when they are not formal DUSA representatives. Newly selected student representatives on University-level committees such as Academic Board and the PRC are encouraged to attend meetings as observers prior to the commencement of their term so that they can become familiar with the pattern of operations of the committee. Secretaries of Faculty Boards also attempt to contact in-coming student representatives to assist with their induction, but are not always successful.

DUSA represents all Deakin students and operates across all campuses, with executive positions to represent students with special interests, such as postgraduate students and students studying

by distance. In general, this appears to work well as a way of representing to the University matters of concern and interest to students. Most students met by the Panel, however, were largely unaware of DUSA activities in this regard.

2.4 Policy Framework

Following the review of Council performance in 2002, the University has established a policy framework which has documented the responsibilities of various bodies in relation to policy development within the University and Council's role in approving policy.

An area for improvement identified in the University's 2004 Operational Plan is "to convert all Academic Board policies to the standard University format and implement a schedule of 3-yearly reviews of policies" (target 1.2.3, Deakin University Operational Plan 2004) and the Panel endorses this intention.

In its recent work to formalise activities into policy, Academic Board and its sub-committees have been developing a number of new policy documents. This has meant that central policy development has sometimes outpaced faculties' ability to respond to these policies. There is a tendency for each faculty to interpret University policy through its own set of rules or guidelines, resulting in a proliferation of documents with variations that appear unnecessary and time-consuming for both implementation and monitoring. One example of this is the promulgation of faculty-specific rules for assuring comparability of assessment (see section 3.4.1). The University includes in the Operational Plan the target to "ensure that faculties and other areas review their existing policies to make them consistent with University policies, rename their policies as rules, repeal redundant policies, and where necessary, develop and implement rules to implement University policies" (target A6.3, Deakin University Operational Plan 2004). While the Panel endorses the general intent of this, it believes there is scope to reduce further the extent to which faculty boards reinterpret University policy in faculty-specific rules. It encourages the University in the creation of institutional-level policies that are developed with widespread faculty consultation and which allow for sufficient flexibility to be implemented in response to contextual differences.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that Deakin University consider unification of rules or guidelines for implementation of University policies that acknowledges and allows for contextual differences.

Another consequence of the amount of policy development work currently underway is a sense of information overload for some staff. In an attempt to respond to this, it has been determined that policies will be 'launched' twice a year. This potentially creates unhelpful delays in implementation and the University should consider other mechanisms that can be used to inform staff about policy changes that affect their work.

3 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Strategic Plan includes the following primary objective with respect to teaching and learning: “to provide excellent teaching in relation to undergraduate, postgraduate and professional development programs of contemporary relevance that are available to students wherever they are located and developed in consultation with potential employers, industry, government and professional bodies” (p.4).

3.1 *Teaching and Learning Leadership*

Academic Board is the principal academic authority in the University and is “responsible to Council for maintaining academic standards in all University programs, with particular emphasis on teaching, assessment, research and research training, and monitoring compliance with its policies” (Role and Responsibilities of Academic Board, December 2003). The four standing committees of Academic Board are the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Research and Research Training Committee, the Information Services Committee and the Admission and Selection Committee. Some of these committees have formed sub-committees to assist in the discharge of their responsibilities. The Panel has already commented on the effectiveness of the operation of Academic Board (see section 2.2) and made a recommendation in relation to the improvements still required in the operation of some Academic Board committees (see section 2.2.1 and Recommendation 2).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has responsibility for strategic and operational planning for teaching and learning. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Online Services) has responsibility for the development, co-ordination and integration of Deakin’s online facilities and services to support teaching and learning.

Learning Services, reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), is an academic support unit that provides library services; curriculum design, development and production services and academic professional development services.

The Teaching and Learning Functional Plan is currently under development. The draft that was supplied to the Panel gives a comprehensive outline of the context of developments in higher education and the implications for Deakin and outlines the high-level objectives for the University. Details on measuring teaching and learning outcomes were yet to be completed in the draft. Many of the Panel’s comments on teaching and learning activities are areas covered by objectives in the draft Plan. It is important that the Plan is completed and operationalised as soon as possible.

3.1.1 Policy Review

As noted in section 2.4, a considerable amount of academic policy development and revision has been undertaken within the University since the beginning of 2003, including policies relating to Academic Advisory Boards (March 2003); advanced standing (July 2003); assessment (November 2003); course accreditation and re-accreditation (February 2003); evaluation of teaching and units (September 2003); admission and selection to undergraduate and postgraduate awards (March 2004) and TAFE alliances and agreements (September 2003). Much of this work was very timely. In some instances, the phase-in of these policies is still occurring which has made it difficult for the Panel to assess the effectiveness of the policies being implemented.

3.2 *Accreditation and Review*

Proposals for new courses must be approved by the PRC in terms of their strategic rationale and resourcing and by Academic Board in terms of academic merit. Once approved, courses are required to be considered by Academic Board for re-accreditation at least every five years.

The Panel selected a number of different courses and requested accreditation and/or re-accreditation documentation relating to these. They demonstrate that external input is obtained into these processes and provided evidence of the Accreditation Sub-committee referring back to a faculty an application for re-accreditation due to the provision of insufficiently detailed information.

In June 2004, Academic Board approved a policy entitled 'Quality assurance and policy compliance in courses and units' which provides for reviews of units and introduces annual reviews of courses. It also makes provision for targeted reviews of particular courses, schools or faculties that "may be triggered in response to the outcomes of course reviews, the introduction of new policy or any other factors considered relevant by the Academic Board". Although this policy is too recent for the Panel to determine its effectiveness, the Panel endorses the University's attempt to formalise these activities into a quality assurance system. In support of the new system of annual course reviews, the Planning Unit will produce a compendium of Course Experience Questionnaire and Graduate Destination Survey data for each course.

3.2.1 Attributes of Excellent Courses

In July 2002 the Academic Board approved a policy on Attributes of Excellent Courses. Faculties are required to address these criteria in Academic Board accreditation and re-accreditation applications. A checklist has been developed recently to assist in identifying courses that meet the criteria for excellence and this was being trialled at the time of the Panel's visit. A target in the 2004 Operational Plan is to "identify and acknowledge at least two courses in each faculty that meet the criteria for excellence as set out in the policy, and to promote the characteristics of those courses within the University". This will allow for more widespread knowledge of these valued characteristics.

3.3 *The Deakin Advantage*

Consistent with the majority of Australian universities, Deakin has developed a policy "to ensure that undergraduate courses provide educational experiences designed to develop an appropriate level of expert knowledge of a field of study and attributes, including skills and personal qualities which will serve graduates in their lives beyond graduation; known as 'the Deakin Advantage' " (Attributes of a Deakin Graduate, May 2002). The Deakin Advantage includes both discipline-specific and generic attributes, such as effective communication, capacity for teamwork and collaboration and personal attributes such as an understanding of ethics, social responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and the principles and application of sustainable development. Academic Board, through its Accreditation Committee, has the responsibility for ensuring that all new or re-accredited courses are designed to be consistent with the goals of the Deakin Advantage. This is progressively being achieved, with approximately 70% of courses certified as at the end of 2003. It was intended that all courses be compliant by the end of 2004.

The Deakin Advantage is a good concept and it was clear to the Panel that academic staff are taking seriously the need to embed graduate attributes in their courses. The policy states that students will be assisted to recognise and document their skills and knowledge. However, most students met by the Panel have no knowledge or understanding of what the Deakin Advantage is or aims to achieve. Those who had encountered it did not have a good understanding of the goal and more effective communication is needed. The University notes in its Performance Portfolio that it is examining ways of assisting students to document their skills and the Panel endorses the

recognition that this work is required. More than this, however, additional efforts are required to ensure that students understand the aims of the Deakin Advantage in the first instance.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that Deakin University communicate to students more effectively the nature and aims of the Deakin Advantage and assist them to document the discipline-specific and generic skills they are developing throughout their course.

3.4 Assessment

The current Assessment Policy was approved in November 2003. The policy and related procedure recognise the value and importance of both summative and formative assessment practices and sets parameters and guidelines for devising appropriate assessment regimes. It also specifies that faculties will be responsible for setting parameters for the turnaround of assessed work and for the review of results.

3.4.1 Comparability of Assessment

Assessment policy requires that “each faculty shall have rules for ensuring, as far as practicable, comparability of assessment within units between different markers, across all campuses, modes of enrolment, different periods of offer, and different cohorts at twinning and partner institutions” and that “assessment panels shall be responsible for ensuring assessment standards and comparability of assessment for all assessment tasks” (Assessment (Higher Education) Procedure, November 2003). The Panel supports the intention behind this policy as it provides an important quality assurance mechanism for the University. A number of examples of good practice in moderation of assessment across different campuses were seen.

At the time of the audit, each faculty was in the process of seeking approval for its rules from the Teaching and Learning Committee and Academic Board. The Panel notes that each faculty’s rules vary considerably and suggests that there would be benefit in consolidating the various approaches into one University agreed policy with sufficient flexibility to respond to different contexts. This is an example of the issue raised in section 2.4 (and Recommendation 3).

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that Deakin University harmonise its approach to the comparability of assessment such that one set of agreed principles can be applied consistently across the University.

3.4.2 Plagiarism

There is clearly a concerted effort by Deakin University to reduce the occurrence of plagiarism. A policy on plagiarism and collusion was approved by Academic Board in May 2003. Academic staff are required to educate students on how to avoid plagiarism and a sample of units offered in 2004 selected by the Panel showed there is full and clear information provided to students on the dangers of plagiarism, how it may be avoided and the penalties that apply where it is detected. This message is reinforced by assignment cover sheets that contain a statement defining plagiarism and require students to declare that the assignment is their own work. Students met by the Panel felt they had indeed been adequately informed. The University is also currently trialling proprietary plagiarism detection software.

The Panel requested trend data, by faculty, of the number of reported incidents of plagiarism and an analysis of the actions taken. This shows that since 1999, there has been considerable variability in the number of reported incidents across faculties. In one faculty, only four cases

were detected in the past four years. While some of this variability might be able to be accounted for in terms of the nature of assessment in different disciplines, there would be benefit in the University ensuring that all faculties are applying, with equal rigor, University policy in this area.

3.5 *Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units*

In 2003, the University introduced a requirement that every unit should be evaluated by students each time it is offered using a common evaluation instrument that seeks student comment on the quality of both the unit and of teaching. The survey uses a five point Likert scale. The University's self-review highlighted a number of issues about the operation of this system and the need to "review the content of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units survey instrument and re-consider the processes for communicating the results of the survey" has been included as a target in the 2004 Operational Plan (target A1.1, Deakin University Operational Plan 2004). The Audit Panel endorses the need to address both these issues but considers that the review should be considerably wider in scope.

As the University has recognised, the evaluation instrument itself requires further development. One common complaint of students is that there is insufficient opportunity for open-ended comment. The Panel became aware that a number of academic staff have devised their own student surveys to gather feedback from students that is not possible using the University instrument. In revising the instrument, it will be important to consult widely with teaching staff.

An online evaluation system was used for the first time in 2004 for the majority of students. This is consistent with Deakin's increased use of online technology in teaching and the response rate for semester 1 (45%) is higher than for both semester 1 and semester 2 in 2003 (43% and 38%, respectively). Despite this, many students the Panel met reported that they feel less incentive to complete the evaluation now that it is online. It will be important to continue monitoring response rates. There is also a need to consider the timing of the evaluation so as to optimise the value of the feedback and retain student interest in completing the evaluation. Students complained that much is compressed within a short time near the end of semester when they are busy attempting to meet deadlines and prepare for examinations. Perhaps most importantly, many students have formed the view that their feedback is not valued by the University. This perception works against participation in the system and the foreshadowed review should include consideration of how the perception can be counteracted.

The Planning Unit is responsible for processing the results of the student evaluation system. Teaching results are returned to individual staff and are considered as part of the Performance Planning and Review process (see section 8.4). Unit results are considered by the Unit Chair, Head of School and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning). In the Panel's view undue reliance is being placed on the mean response achieved for each item without sufficient attention being placed on the distribution of results. An illustration of this is that mean scores on item 5 ('This unit was well taught') and on items 17 and 18 ('I would recommend this unit to other students' and 'The use of online technologies in this unit enhanced my learning experience') are used as measures of student satisfaction in teaching and units, respectively, in the Council Performance Indicators. Considered alone, this figure is not particularly informative. There is a tendency for staff to consider an average score of three or above as satisfactory. The Panel considers greater sophistication is required in interpreting the results in their context and in ensuring that the system is used to best effect in continuous improvement.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that Deakin University extend the scope of its foreshadowed review of the system of student evaluation of teaching and units to include all aspects of its implementation and follow-up.

A student survey is only one method of obtaining student input into the evaluation of teaching. Students commented that they would like to have greater opportunity to provide feedback on subjects, for example, via focus groups.

3.6 *Distance and Online Teaching and Learning*

In 2004, off-campus students constitute approximately 28% of equivalent full-time student load. Deakin has a fine tradition of distance education, which was originally based on the distribution of printed materials to students. From 2004, all units are required to have a basic online presence which involves provision of at least some resources online and online communication with students. All students commencing an undergraduate degree in 2004 are required to complete at least one fully-online unit. Central funding has been allocated from the current budget to assist each faculty in the development of two wholly online units.

A new learning management system, Deakin Studies Online (DSO), was introduced in 2004. This has been a significant change for staff and students and although it has necessitated significant investment in technical training, the transition to DSO has largely been effected smoothly. As at the end of July 2004, 85% of academic staff had attended at least one training session on DSO.

As increasing emphasis is placed on the use of online teaching, priority now needs to be on leading staff in their re-thinking of pedagogy so that educational technologies can be used to maximise the support of effective student learning. The University's research on student reactions to DSO shows that their satisfaction varies considerably across faculties; this finding was endorsed by students met by the Panel. One area of variability highlighted by distance education students interviewed by the Panel was sometimes unacceptably long delays (up to two months) in staff responding to e-mails or providing feedback on assignments. The DSO Online Progress Report and Improvement Plan submitted to the PRC in August 2004 shows that the University recognises this issue needs attention.

The Division of Learning Services is an academic support unit that provides library services; curriculum design, development and production services; and academic professional development services. Following a review of the Division in December 2003, there has been acknowledgement within the University that organisational structures for the support of teaching and learning within the University have not facilitated a strong emphasis on the pedagogical implications of the University's shift toward online technologies. At the time of the audit, the senior executive was consulting with staff on the most effective way of responding to this concern. One option being considered is the establishment of an Institute of Teaching and Learning. The Panel considers that this could be an important strategy to facilitate the improvement of online teaching within the University. More effective mechanisms and processes are required to 'close the gap' between policy relating to online teaching and learning and its implementation University-wide.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms Deakin University's recognition of the need to reshape organisational structures for the support of teaching and learning so that they can better position the University to respond to the pedagogical implications of its move toward use of online technology.

Deakin has had a strong tradition in conventional print-based distance education and its staff have frequently taken the lead in developing pedagogy for this form of teaching and learning. Given the number of students that enrol from a distance at Deakin, the University now has the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the very different pedagogy required, and possible, in online education.

3.6.1 Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program

The Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program commenced in 2003 and is aimed at providing academic staff with the opportunity to engage in the development of online teaching and learning environments. Fellows are granted time release to develop their project and are involved in a range of other activities and events, such as advanced DSO training and a series of regular seminars and meetings to discuss a range of relevant issues. In 2004, two Fellowship places were provided for each faculty, with central and faculty funding supporting one Fellow each.

Formal feedback following the 2003 program and the Audit Panel's discussions with current Fellows provide evidence for the value being derived by the participants in this program for the expansion of their online teaching activities. A specific objective of the program is "to encourage peer-based professional development through skill sharing and mentoring". To this end, Fellows are required to present their work in a University-wide seminar at the end of the year and through the teaching and learning website. These are positive initiatives. Although the program is obviously bringing large benefits to participating staff, the reach of the program is still relatively limited and more concerted effort is required to ensure the program achieves optimum effectiveness in this regard. There is a need to devise strategies to increase the transfer of skills and approaches gained by the Fellows to staff less committed to online teaching and the consideration of pedagogy.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends Deakin University for its support of the Online Teaching and Learning Fellowship Program which is an innovative and successful strategy for supporting those staff with an interest in further extending the use of online technologies in their teaching.

3.6.2 Supporting Resources for Students

Deakin has put considerable effort and resources into mechanisms to improve communication with students. Two major strategies for communication with students are not working as effectively as the University might expect.

The Student Portal, while impressive to the Panel, appears to be not particularly valued by students. Many students the Panel met either are not aware of it or do not use it. Those who do not use the Portal are often students with a dial-up connection from home which makes access through the Portal slow and cumbersome. The Panel was also impressed with the Learning Toolkit but student awareness of it, too, appears relatively low and usage seems frequently to be limited only to software download. The Panel notes that the Toolkit for 2005 is to be revised to focus on and target students' needs in a simpler and more concise way.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that in reviewing the Student Portal and Learning Toolkit, Deakin University ensure that it consults extensively with students to ensure that their patterns of need and usage, as well as the limitations on personal computing equipment are fully recognised and accommodated.

4 RESEARCH

The Strategic Plan includes the following goals with respect to research: “to have a vibrant culture of research with a critical mass of researchers associated with each major discipline providing every student with the experience of being taught by leading researchers, and to foster internationally competitive research groups in areas of strategic importance” (p.6).

The Performance Portfolio notes that “in line with the University’s mission, the focus for Deakin is on relevant research, that is, research that makes a difference, and on research degrees that are responsive to the needs of society” (p.42).

4.1 *Research Leadership*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for oversight of the University’s research and research training strategy, as articulated in the Strategic and Operational Plans and the Research and Research Training Functional Area Plan 2003-2005. Research Services supports research management and policy development in the University, and provides central administrative support for research and research training. It provides a wide range of services including managing schemes for the distribution of centrally-managed resources for research, including grants, fellowships and scholarships; working with academic staff in the development of competitive proposals for outside funding and promoting University research activities to industry, government and the wider community; negotiating research opportunities and funding. Staff met by the Panel report general satisfaction with these services.

The Research Management sub-committee of PRC is responsible for providing advice on strategy and funding (see also section 2.3). Academic Board, through its committee the Research and Research Training Committee, is responsible for quality assurance of all research activity. The Higher Degrees by Research sub-committee of the Research and Research Training Committee has particular responsibility for research training and this is discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 of this Report.

4.2 *Research Strategy*

In the early years of Deakin University, relatively little emphasis was placed on research but this has changed more recently as the University has pursued a policy of developing research activity in a limited number of areas of strategic priority. Research Priority Areas (RPAs) are University-recognised areas funded in part from the central research budget and are headed by a senior and experienced researcher. ‘Emerging’ areas of research strength are research groups and concentrations supported at faculty level that may potentially become a RPA in future.

4.2.1 Research Priority Areas

The University currently has eight RPAs in the following areas: advanced materials and manufacturing; biotechnology; chronic illness; citizenship and globalisation; physical activity; quality learning; social and mental health; and sustainable natural resource management. Bids for RPA status were considered by the Research Management sub-committee of the PRC and selected on their ability to establish effective partnerships with industry, and their physical and staff resources. A significant proportion of income for some of the RPAs is secured from industry sources.

The work of the RPAs and their contributions to the achievement of University research objectives is monitored closely by the Research Management sub-committee through the approval of annual operational plans and through annual reporting. As part of this annual report,

each area is required to provide information on their performance relative to national and international comparators. Based on an examination of a sample of reports selected by the Panel, it is evident that some are more advanced than others in gathering and using 'benchmark' data. Some additional assistance and support in this area is warranted for RPAs lagging in this respect (see Affirmation 1).

The creation of the RPAs has been a successful strategy in raising the profile and interest in research within the University. The RPAs are broad enough to allow approximately 70% of the University's research active staff to be associated in some way with an RPA but the policy has been implemented in such a way that staff whose research does not fall within an identified area nonetheless feel supported by the University. RPAs have become a focus for co-operation and mentoring for members, such as providing assistance with research grant writing. Some RPAs sponsor development programs for their members who are considered to be underperforming in research. Increased co-ordination of these activities may be possible to reduce the duplication of effort which was evident in some areas.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends Deakin University for the establishment of Research Priority Areas which are successfully providing a stimulus for the development of research networks across the University and partnerships with external organisations.

It appears to the Panel that there is further scope to involve the Heads of RPAs in the further development of the University's research strategy. Since the RPAs sit alongside the formal committee structure of the University, the potential input of these staff is not as well harnessed as it may be. In addition, the role of Head of an RPA does not always receive a workload allocation and where it does, the amount varies quite considerably. There is scope to support further these staff in their important roles of actively fostering a research-supportive environment throughout the University.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that Deakin University consider improved mechanisms for involving, as a group, the Heads of Research Priority Areas in strategic planning for research.

4.3 Support for Early Career Researchers

Support for early career researchers is critically important as the University moves to expand its research profile. The University, faculties and RPAs are all offering different elements of support to these staff.

The Early Career Researcher Residential Workshop, a two-day intensive workshop, is highly valued by participants and should be continued. Sessions in the two workshops held in 2004 included discussion of the place of research within the University and higher degree by research supervision practices. Participants were also required to bring with them a draft application for the next internal research grant round. This was critiqued and workshopped by senior staff and other workshop participants. The analysis of feedback showed this session was most valuable and this was confirmed by the early career researchers met by the Panel. Many of these staff reported that the grant application considered at the workshop had been significantly improved as a result and had subsequently been successful. This type of mentoring activity is occurring also in some schools. The residential workshop is received so positively, in particular for the assistance with writing research grant applications, that some researchers suggested annual follow-up sessions for a few years.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends Deakin University for its two-day intensive workshop for early career researchers which are highly valued by staff and which facilitate their first research grant applications.

Ways of effectively managing the workload of academic staff and, particularly early career staff, are needed. This is discussed in section 8.5.

4.4 Outcomes Measures and Success

Council Performance Indicators (CPIs) for research are research income; number of publications weighted per full-time effective academic staff; and the percentage of research active staff. All three measures have been significantly increasing in recent years, from a relatively low base. For instance, total research income has increased from approximately \$7million in 1999 to \$20.5million in 2003. The percentage of research active staff has increased from 31% in 2000 to 36% in 2003. To qualify as research active a staff member must have earned at least one point in the national research publication collection, earned at least \$10,000 in research income, or earned at least 0.5 publication point and attracted some external research funding.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends Deakin University for the significant improvement of a number of research performance measures in recent years.

The University places major emphasis on conducting relevant research that 'makes a difference'. This is not reflected in the CPIs for research (see above), which are measures of activity rather than impact.

The Geelong and Warrnambool campuses earned approximately 68% of the University's external research income in 2003. Much of this research is conducted with local industry and/or government partners and is applied in nature. Research staff based at the Warrnambool campus, in particular, have been successful at capitalising on their location to produce research in ecology and aquaculture. Since 1999 there has been a significant increase annually in the number of external organisations with which the Warrnambool-based staff have developed research partnerships.

As noted in section 1.2.2, the Panel affirms the University's recognition of the need to implement a comprehensive approach to the effective use of external comparisons across its range of activities including for research.

5 RESEARCH TRAINING

The University's Strategic Plan includes the following objectives specifically linked to research training:

- “Increasing the enrolment of high quality higher degree by research candidates by providing an outstanding research training environment with quality supervision, skill and leadership enhancement programs, work-place training through effective partnerships and short completion times through well planned candidature;
- Maintaining and extending the ways that students' views on their research training experience and the quality of student support services are sought on a regular basis and ensuring that these are part of the continuous quality improvement process so that problems are addressed” (p.6).

5.1 *Management*

As noted above, Academic Board has responsibility for maintaining oversight of quality assurance of the University's research training program. This is exercised through the Research and Research Training Committee (a committee of Academic Board) and, most especially, by its Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) sub-committee.

While the formal terms of reference of the HDR sub-committee are very clear, the Panel was not confident that the members have a good understanding of the ways in which the committee could or should be exercising its responsibilities at University level. It appears reactive and not to be taking a leadership role in ensuring University-wide assurance of the research training program.

The HDR sub-committee needs to formalise the ways in which it attends to the quality assurance mechanisms in place (such as annual candidate progress reports; oversight and follow-up of research degree reviews). The Panel's investigations in this area provided evidence of breakdowns in implementation of 'The Regulation and Procedures for Higher Degrees by Research'.

As discussed in section 1.2 and Recommendation 2, attention is needed to improve the understanding of quality assurance measures and their place within the University's overall quality management system. Particular attention is needed to develop the capacity of the HDR sub-committee to fulfil its leadership role in HDR matters.

5.1.1 Research Degree Course Reviews

In 2002, the HDR sub-committee operating within the framework of the Academic Board (prior to its being reconstituted) instituted a system of reviewing research degrees at least every five years. The review involves administering a written satisfaction survey to current and past students, with follow-up interviews of a representative sample of respondents.

The first review to be undertaken was that of the Doctor of Philosophy, completed by a working party of the HDR sub-committee in May 2003. This review consisted of an analysis of statistical data for the period 1997-2002 (such as applications, enrolments, progressions and examination results) as well as surveys of current, withdrawn, and past students and of supervisors. The review resulted in 15 recommendations, some of which were put forward by the Research and Research Training Committee for endorsement by Academic Board at its meeting in June 2004. These recommendations request faculties or schools to advise the HDR sub-committee of their approach to particular issues. From discussions with the sub-committee it was apparent to the Panel that the HDR sub-committee members were unaware of the progress of responses to these

recommendations and where responsibility for monitoring the follow-up action from such reviews rests. In light of the University's commitment to ensuring continuous quality improvement, there needs to be clarification of how and by whom effective follow-up of these reviews will be ensured. This needs to be resolved prior to the impending reviews of the remaining professional doctorates.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that Deakin University clarify the role of the Higher Degrees by Research sub-committee in the oversight and effective follow-up of research degree reviews.

As noted below, some reconsideration of the nature and scope of these reviews is warranted.

5.2 *Quality Assurance of Supervision*

The HDR sub-committee is responsible for encouraging good supervisory practices and in March 2004 revised the 'Code of Good Practice in Supervision of Higher Degrees by Research', which continues to be promulgated throughout the University. The Higher Degrees by Research Procedure and the Code state that a principal supervisor should not normally supervise more than the equivalent of seven full-time HDR candidates concurrently, and the HDR sub-committee must approve formally the supervisory arrangements of all higher degree candidates. Excluding those students whose work is currently being examined, three staff have a supervisory load of more than seven equivalent full-time student units (EFTSU); none of whom have undergraduate teaching responsibilities. The Panel was informed that 32 staff have a load of more than five EFTSU.

Discussions with HDR students revealed concerns with the level of availability of some supervisors who are perceived by students to be under pressure to increase research productivity. The Panel believes there would be benefits from a University-wide analysis of workload of supervisors with a view to stringent application of caps on the numbers of students supervised by any one supervisor.

The Panel was informed that emphasis is increasingly being placed on the appointment of supervisory teams as a means of increasing support for students, although this is not required by regulation nor particularly emphasised in the Code of Practice. The team approach is seen by the Panel as a positive development.

A number of supervisor development activities were described to the Panel but there did not appear to be any incentives to participate nor a systematic program of opportunities available across the faculties. The Panel formed the view that the University needs to articulate an overarching program for supervisor development that could be delivered under the sponsorship of the HDR sub-committee, through Research Services or through collaborative efforts of faculties. This would involve setting minimum requirements for training for supervisors at all levels of experience, not just new supervisors. Whichever approach is adopted, the program could utilise the web-based resources and self-paced activities provided through the *FIRST (for Improving Research Supervision and Training)* website maintained by the Australian and New Zealand consortium for supervisor development of which Deakin is a member.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that Deakin University implement an ongoing training program for higher degree by research supervisors at all levels of experience and draw on resources available from external sources.

5.2.1 Annual Progress Review

The University has a policy requiring an annual progress review of each HDR candidate, with the aim being to identify and remedy any problems with candidature. Most, although not all, students met by the Panel had completed the progress review. Students met at Warrnambool, who were clearly satisfied with their supervision, universally had no idea about the review process and had not completed any formal review.

The nature of the review is not prescribed although its outcome must be reported to the HDR sub-committee in a standard format. Administrative handling of the reports is the responsibility of Research Services. The Chair of the HDR sub-committee has delegated authority to consider these reports and respond as necessary. This may involve referring issues to the appropriate Associate Dean (Research) or intervening directly him or herself, although there is an expectation that issues arising from the review will generally be handled within the school.

The HDR sub-committee does not play a strong role in using these reports for the identification of generic issues that may arise and is not using them for full effect for continual quality improvement. Similarly, the sub-committee's role in considering, and ensuring action on, student satisfaction data obtained from the University's annual survey and from sources such as the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire is not clear (see also section 5.3.1).

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that Deakin University's processes for the analysis and response to surveys of higher degree by research students and annual progress reports be clearly outlined within a framework of accountability for action on issues that arise and that the Higher Degrees by Research sub-committee's role in overseeing the use of this information for continuous quality improvement be addressed.

5.3 *Induction and Support of Higher Degree by Research Students*

The majority of HDR students talked to by the Panel felt well oriented to postgraduate life by their supervisor and were generally positive about their experiences. Approximately 40% of HDR students are enrolled in areas associated with a recognised Research Priority Area.

Of the approximate 1,000 HDR students at the University, half are mature-age, studying part-time and off-campus. Supervisors of these students are expected to maintain regular communication by e-mail and phone and some faculties or schools organise on-campus workshops. The HDR sub-committee does not consider that any additional quality assurance measures are required for off-campus students but the Panel noted that there are few opportunities for these students to participate in workshops designed to develop skills in the processes of researching and writing a thesis and believes that a program along these lines, perhaps offered online, should be developed for the benefit of students in all faculties (including on-campus students).

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that Deakin University extend the range of skills development workshops available to higher degree by research students and provide them to both on- and off-campus students using appropriate technologies.

5.3.1 Monitoring Student Satisfaction

The University's Strategic Plan includes the goal of "maintaining and extending the ways that students' views on their research training experience and the quality of student support services

are sought on a regular basis and ensuring that these are part of the continuous quality improvement process so that problems are addressed” (p.6).

An annual survey of HDR student satisfaction has been undertaken since 1999. It seeks students’ perceptions of the quality of supervision and of the research environment. The results of this survey are reported to the PRC through the Research Management sub-committee. Where the survey identifies areas for improvement, the Research Management sub-committee refers these to faculties for attention. There is further scope to ensure that improvements occur in a co-ordinated and systemic fashion, particularly where they relate to generic issues across the University. The mean response on both items is also reported to Council as part of the CPI Report. Reporting the mean score only is indicative but of limited usefulness as in the case of student evaluations of teaching (see section 3.5).

The Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire results are considered by the Research Management sub-committee of the PRC but again, it is not clear how this Committee or the HDR sub-committee, Research Services and relevant other areas within the University engage with and act upon this data (see Recommendation 11).

5.4 Professional Doctorates

The University offers a number of professional doctorate programs, with two further programs under consideration at the time of the audit. The Doctor of Education, Deakin’s first professional doctorate, is currently in the process of being phased out and subsumed within the structure of the PhD.

The Performance Portfolio notes that “while differing in content and approach, the [professional doctorate] degree is equivalent in standard to the PhD” (p.44). In questioning how this is assured, the Panel was informed that all research degrees are governed by the same regulation and set of procedures; examiners for professional doctorates are selected using the same criteria and from the same groups as PhD examiners and that the criteria sent to examiners for professional doctorates are based on those for the PhD. This approach is limited and overlooks a number of fundamental questions such as program standards, pedagogy and differentiation of professional doctorates and PhD courses.

The existing review process for research degrees discussed above (see section 5.1.1) does not allow scope for any fundamental re-thinking of the rationale of an individual course. Nor does it allow consideration of the place and structure of the University’s higher degree courses as a whole. The Panel believes there would be value in a general review of professional doctorates at Deakin particularly in light of the decision of the Faculty of Education to reframe its professional doctorate as a PhD. Such a review is timely before the University embarks on introducing any new professional doctorate courses.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that Deakin University undertake a review of the place, scope and pedagogy of its professional doctorates in relation to the PhD, and that the review include appropriate external input.

6 INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalisation spans the entire organisation. Aspects of internationalisation that relate to other core activities (e.g. teaching) are addressed in the sections of this Report in which they arise. This section addresses matters that are particular to Deakin University's international strategy.

The Strategic Plan includes the following primary objective with respect to internationalisation: "to promote internationalisation throughout the University in a way that is valued by staff and students" (p.8).

6.1 *Management and Oversight*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) has responsibility for overseeing strategic and operational planning in relation to internationalisation and Deakin International has responsibility for the management of the University's international student program, including marketing and recruitment and support for on-shore international students. Deakin International also operates the University's English Language Institute. In July 2003, a Partnerships Office was established within Deakin International. The Office is charged with overseeing the development, implementation and monitoring of the University's international agreements and is the principal point of contact within the University for such matters.

Within each faculty, an Associate Dean (International) or equivalent position has been established to oversee and report to the Dean on internationally-oriented activities.

6.2 *Off-shore Teaching Partnerships*

The University's Strategic Plan includes "confirming and strengthening Deakin's market identity and raising the international profile of Deakin through strategic international partnerships and alliances" and "enhancing Deakin's reputation as a provider of flexible distance education offshore" (p.8).

The University has agreements with 14 international partners, three of which are currently inactive. The active agreements involved 1,250 student enrolments as at 31 March 2004. In 2003 and 2004 the University initiated several reviews of these off-shore teaching partnerships. The first of these, undertaken by the Office of Internal Audit, investigated the systems for internal control for monitoring and managing off-shore programs and was published in November 2003. Separately from this, the 2003 Operational Plan included a target to conduct a review of the quality assurance of off-shore programs and this report was completed in March 2004. One outcome of these activities was the approval, in December 2003, of an Offshore Teaching Partnerships Policy. This puts in place a much needed policy framework for the management of these activities.

The most extensive self-review of the University's off-shore activities was finalised in June 2004 and involved the review team making visits to each of the active partners. This resulted in recommendations for improvement being made specific to each partnership, as well as a number of University-wide recommendations. The review was highly self-critical indicating that "whereas some of the partnerships are both academically and strategically sound, others raise serious issues in relation to compliance with academic policies as well as concerns about financial viability" (Report of the Review of Offshore Teaching Partnerships, 2004, p.8). Deakin is to be congratulated for undertaking this review; for including such a frank report in its Performance Portfolio; and for the convincing way in which it has begun to address the identified problems.

Without such extensive investigations by the University, the Audit Panel almost certainly would have undertaken visits to a sample of Deakin's off-shore partners so that it could assess the quality assurance system relating to these activities. Instead, the Panel focused its attention on considering the systems the University is putting in place to ensure that the identified areas for improvement are acted upon. The University has prepared an extensive implementation plan itemising the recommendations that have arisen from the various reviews outlined above, and for each has identified the responsible individual or area within the University and the timeframe for completion. The Panel spent some time discussing this with the June review group and felt assured that there is a strong system in place, and the necessary commitment, for ensuring the required improvements.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms Deakin University's action plan to address the various quality improvements needed in its management and quality assurance of off-shore teaching partnerships.

The Offshore Teaching Partnerships Manual, currently being developed by the Partnerships Office, should assist in formalising the University's oversight and administration of these activities.

The Panel endorses the University's intention to clarify the place of teaching partnerships within the University's internationalisation strategy. The current Internationalisation Functional Area Plan 2004-2007 does not do so.

6.3 *On-shore International Students*

With respect to the recruitment and support of international students, the University aims to ensure:

- “that there is a critical mass of appropriately qualified international students in all undergraduate programs and in relevant postgraduate programs; and
- that international students' views on their teaching and learning experiences and the quality of student support services provided to them are sought on a regular basis and that this is part of the continuous quality improvement process so that any problems are addressed” (Strategic Plan, p.8).

By far the majority of the University's fee-paying international students are based at the Burwood campus, accounting for 53% of the University's effective full-time international students as at 31 March 2004 (2,208 of the total 4,097 international EFTSU). In 2003 the Warrnambool City Council obtained funding to carry out a study of the ways of attracting and supporting international students to Warrnambool and has established an International Student Development Steering Group on which the University is represented. It is hoped that this will eventually lead to an increase in the number of international students choosing to study at the Warrnambool campus.

The International Student Support Unit within Deakin International and the Division of Student Life have responsibility for service provision to international students. Results of the International Student Orientation Survey for semester 1, 2004 show that the Orientation Program was generally well received and found to be useful, although some areas for improvement were identified. The international students met by the Panel were generally satisfied with the services available to them. Consistent with the strategic objective quoted above, the University plans to conduct a pilot survey of international students on their perceptions of the quality of the teaching

and student support services provided to them. The Panel supports this intention as it will allow for better informed decision-making on the priorities for meeting the needs of these students.

A study of comparative academic performance of international and domestic undergraduate students undertaken by the University in 2001 showed that, from 1995 to 2000, the academic progression rates of international students surpassed domestic students at unit level. In 2000, retention rates of international students were found to be statistically significantly lower than those for domestic students for the first time since 1996. In response to this, the University made some improvements to the provision of student support services particularly at the Burwood campus. Deakin plans to repeat this research in 2005 and the Panel endorses this intention.

6.3.1 Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology

Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology (MIBT) is the University's principal institutional partner in the preparation of international students for university-level study. It is registered with the Victorian Department of Education and Training as a Registered Training Organisation and listed on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students. MIBT graduates are eligible to be considered for entry into the second year of the relevant Deakin undergraduate degree and to receive advanced standing.

A number of quality assurance mechanisms are in place to cover this agreement, including Deakin approving all staff teaching in MIBT programs prior to appointment. Examination papers prepared by MIBT teaching staff are required to be approved by the Unit Chairs of the corresponding undergraduate units at Deakin, and examination scripts, once marked by MIBT teaching staff, are moderated by Deakin prior to the release of results. Moderation of assessment is the responsibility of the sponsoring faculty for each course. In accordance with the agreement between Deakin and MIBT, an Academic Advisory Committee was established in 2002 to oversee these arrangements. Examination of the minutes from this group suggest that it is a useful mechanism for discussing and progressing resolution of issues important to success of the venture such as improving the ease of transition of students from the Institute to the University.

As part of the University's recent emphasis on increasing the formalisation of its partnerships activities, a new operational policy and procedures were approved covering this partnership in August 2004.

7 COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES: RURAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The Strategic Plan includes the following primary objective with respect to community responsibilities:

- “to work in partnership with local communities in Burwood, Geelong and Warrnambool, and with governments, industry, business and the professions, to advance the interests of Victoria and Australia;
- to champion equity and access; and
- to be committed to providing: flexible teaching programs; distance and online education; workplace-based learning and continuing education; and research and teaching programs that advance the needs of South Central and South Western Victoria” (p.11).

7.1 *Management and Accountabilities*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) has particular responsibility for rural and regional engagement which is seen to be distinct from general community engagement and includes engagement with all communities of interest. The Community Responsibilities; Rural and Regional Engagement Functional Plan 2004-2006 outlines strategies and targets in this area.

7.2 *Community Activities*

Staff at Deakin make positive formal and informal contributions to community life. These include public lectures, memberships of community boards and committees, actively participating in community events such as the annual ‘Relay for Life’ and a range of other activities. Students also sometimes become involved in these events.

The University has identified the development of partnerships with and activities in secondary schools in South Central and South Western Victoria as a particular priority, although a scholarships program for some schools within the City of Whitehorse is also planned for 2005. The University’s Burwood communities have a distinctive character and Deakin, through this initiative and others, is beginning to explore ways of further developing positive relationships with its neighbours at this campus.

The University needs to be more proactive in communicating its achievements to its various community stakeholders, especially in relation to its research activities and achievements. The University has recognised the need to “formalise an annual program of public events on Deakin’s campuses in 2005 that strengthen the partnerships between the University and its local communities” (Performance Portfolio, p.65) and the Panel endorses this.

7.3 *Rural and Regional Engagement*

A commitment to ‘rural and regional engagement’ is one of three core commitments identified by the University in 2003. This and the establishment, also in 2003, of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) position are regarded by the members of the University’s regional communities as tangible signals of the University’s commitment to sustain its rural and regional character.

As noted above, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) has particular responsibility for enhancing the relevance and responsiveness of the University’s teaching, research partnerships and international areas in the areas surrounding the University’s Geelong and Warrnambool campuses. This appointment has been very positively received, particularly by members of the

Warrnambool community, where the person is based and from where appropriate outreach activities extend.

The Panel was grateful for the opportunity to meet with a large number of representatives from both the Warrnambool and Geelong communities. There is no doubt that in both these communities Deakin University is highly valued. The two cities particularly appreciate the University's local provision of professional courses such as teaching and nursing which increases the likelihood that graduates will stay to work in their own communities.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends Deakin University for its strategy to link with, and serve, the needs of its rural and regional communities.

7.3.1 Community Reference Groups

For a number of years a Warrnambool Community Reference Group has operated as an advisory group to the Vice-Chancellor on matters relating to the University's activities in South West Victoria. In 2004, a similar group was established for the Geelong area. The Audit Panel met members of both groups. It is clear that they value the opportunities the reference group meetings provide to learn more about current University activities, to provide comment on these and to develop relationships with fellow reference group members which have led to individual business or other collaborative ventures. Clearly the reference groups have been a worthwhile and positive development but the Panel considers that there is additional scope for the University to use these groups as active participants in the identification of ways the University can contribute to these communities. The Panel notes the intention to review the operation of these groups and endorses this. It suggests that as part of the review, some thought be given to the possible merits of establishing a similar reference group for Burwood/Toorak.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms Deakin University's intention to review the operation and effectiveness of its Community Reference Groups for South Western and South Central Victoria.

At the end of 2003, the University conducted a pilot survey of the Warrnambool Community Reference Group to assess their perceptions of the ways in which the University relates to the community. Unfortunately the survey was limited in its design and the responses not particularly informative but the Panel supports the University's desire to seek input from stakeholders.

7.4 *Equity and Access*

One of the three core commitments identified by the University in 2003 is "equity and access for individuals and groups who might not otherwise enjoy the benefits that flow from participating in higher education". Both students and staff are very proud of the tradition of access and equity at Deakin that is now highlighted as a core commitment. For many Deakin staff, this is seen as a defining characteristic of a regional university where students who do not achieve Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER) scores to permit entry into major metropolitan universities but nonetheless get the opportunity for a university education. The 'value adding' characteristic of Deakin is commendable and is highly regarded by internal and external communities alike. Many staff met by the Panel feel strongly that this should remain a distinctive feature of Deakin and that any move to increase ENTER scores should not exclude these students who, though capable, would otherwise not be eligible.

The current student profile of the University demonstrates the extent to which the equity and access principle is applied. Of the 31,000 students enrolled at the University in 2004, 57% of the

commencing undergraduate intake were non-school leavers; 46% were over 25 years of age; 52% were enrolled on-and off-campus at the Geelong and Warrnambool campuses. These figures combined with the 40% of students who study off-campus demonstrate that equity and access are taken seriously by the University.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends Deakin University for its manifest commitment to equity and access which allows individuals and groups who might otherwise not be able to participate in higher education to do so.

7.4.1 Institute of Koorie Education

The Institute of Koorie Education was established in 1992 and works in partnership with faculties to offer undergraduate courses in law, nursing, social work, education and arts to Indigenous students throughout Australia using a community-based learning model. The Institute also offers postgraduate courses in health and environmental science. The community-based learning model is particularly well suited to students in rural and remote areas who are able to study from home, attending the University for residential programs. It is an exemplar for Australia. The Audit Panel held a teleconference meeting with a range of the Institute's students in locations across the country including remote centres of Western Australia. These students are particularly grateful for the opportunity which the Institute's model has provided them, and for the support services available.

Commendation 8

AUQA commends Deakin University's Institute of Koorie Education for the community-based learning model that is successfully providing Indigenous students with access to higher education.

7.4.2 DeakinPrime

DeakinPrime was established in 1993 to provide, or to promote, education and development programs that are particularly tailored to the needs of commercial organisations, government, professional associations and industry groups. DeakinPrime is subject to University legislation and policy, as well as to the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Training Framework. Following an internal audit in mid 2002, the University has been working throughout late 2002 and 2003 to strengthen its quality assurance procedures for vocational education and training courses, establishing them as awards of the University and bringing them under the consideration of the Academic Board (and its Vocational Education and Training sub-committee). Another change has been to require faculties to sponsor, oversee and report in relation to each vocational award. These have been positive developments.

Since vocational education and training is outside the scope of an AUQA audit, DeakinPrime was not a significant feature of the Audit Panel's investigations. However it is evident that DeakinPrime is an example of successful, long-term engagement with some significant business and professional association partners.

7.5 *Alumni*

The Panel met a number of alumni of the University who would like to maintain a meaningful connection with Deakin. This need has been recognised by the University. Among the many strategies listed in the Strategic Plan for meeting its community responsibilities is to "build links with Deakin's alumni both in Australia and internationally to encourage their continued involvement in the development of the University community" (p.12). The Operational Plan gives priority to developing a plan for engaging with alumni and to the establishment of an

alumni database, which is already under construction. The University has recognised the need to develop its links with alumni in a systematic manner to ensure long-term sustainability and the Panel agrees. In developing the alumni engagement plan, the Panel suggests that it will be important to work closely with alumni in identifying ways in which connections may be mutually beneficial.

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms Deakin University's recognition of alumni as an important community group with which it could develop stronger links.

8 HUMAN RESOURCES

The Strategic Plan includes the following primary objective with respect to staff: “to attract, retain and develop outstanding staff who are committed to the mission and goals of the University and to increase staff numbers in areas of strategic need by the responsible use of revenue growth” (p.9).

The Human Resources Functional Area Plan 2004-2007 was in draft form at the time of the audit. It identifies objectives and strategies for staff-related priorities and contains the following aspirational goals:

- “to achieve a deserved reputation as an Employer of Choice;
- to build confidence in staff that they have a role in shaping Deakin’s distinctive mission;
- provide staff with the opportunity to grow with Deakin in terms of achieving their personal and professional goals.”

The Human Resource Services Division (HRSD) provides support and specialised advice to budget centre managers who are accountable for achieving human resource targets in their area.

8.1 *Recruitment and Retention of Staff*

With its increased emphasis on research in recent years, the University has recognised the need to increase the number of staff with doctoral qualifications. Academic staff recruitment and selection policies and procedures were reviewed in 2001 and 2002.

One of the Council Performance Indicators is staff-initiated turnover. The University’s monitoring of this indicator has shown that for both general and academic staff, the rate of staff-initiated turnover is higher than the benchmark figure derived from nine, mainly rural, Australian universities. The University has rightly identified the financial and other costs associated with a turnover of staff at this rate and has been attempting to address this for some years. A simplified exit interview questionnaire was introduced in 2002 which has provided some useful information on issues to be resolved. In June 2004, Council received a report analysing the reasons for the turnover and identifying what action can be taken to address it. The Panel encourages the University in its ongoing efforts to rectify the situation.

The Panel notes that an area of improvement signalled for attention by the University in 2005 is the identification of “factors that will assist Deakin to attract high calibre mid-career academic staff and, if necessary, [revision of] employment processes to improve Deakin’s success in recruiting such staff” (Performance Portfolio, p.73). The Panel supports this intention.

8.2 *Induction*

Induction of new staff occurs through both centrally and locally provided programs. At University level, orientation information is available from the HRSD website and welcome events for new staff are also organised which allow them the opportunity to meet members of the senior executive. A new development in 2004 has been the launch of the excellent online Induction Program, which takes a ‘just in time’ approach to providing the large amount of information with which new staff must become familiar. The information is packaged into five modules – the first being an introduction and the others with relevant information for the new staff member’s ‘first day’; ‘first week’; ‘first month’; and ‘first three months’. As the staff member is guided through the program, links to more detailed information are provided as relevant. A breakdown of the program’s uptake across organisational units shows that anywhere from eight to 100% of new

staff logged on. Automated tracking of completion rates is currently not technically possible. The Panel encourages the University to continue close monitoring of the program's effectiveness.

The University intends to investigate improved induction processes for academic staff in faculties to ensure a more systematic process is used for all staff, including sessional and casual staff and the Panel endorses this intention.

8.3 *Staff Development*

There was a consensus amongst the staff met by the Panel that the University provides a relevant program of staff development and that there is generally good support for staff to undertake development activities as required, which was described by some staff as a 'culture for opportunity'. The smaller number of people based at Warrnambool often means that achieving what is considered to be a critical mass to run staff development workshops is difficult and these staff often need to travel to another campus which can sometimes be a disincentive to participate.

HRSD uses the Performance Planning and Review process (see below) to identify staff development needs and provides centrally arranged and funded training courses in three core development areas: leadership and management; interpersonal and personal; and academic, technical or specialist. Trend data made available to the Panel from 2001 shows an upward trend in participation each year.

HRSD also provides a range of leadership and management development activities, which are found to be valuable by those who attend.

8.3.1 Academic Professional Development

The Graduate Certificate in Higher Education has been offered for the first time in semester 2, 2004. Unless exempted by reason of equivalent qualifications or extensive tertiary teaching experience, the intent is that all academic staff appointed to continuing teaching positions at levels A – D are required to complete the Graduate Certificate during the probationary period of appointment. The current enrolment of 43 staff includes 37 people who are new to the University. Those met by the Panel reported that they found this to be a useful course. This is an important initiative consistent with a growing recognition that staff in Australian universities should be provided with increased opportunities to develop skills in teaching and understand how to enhance student learning. For maximum effect, it will be important for Deakin to monitor closely staff opinion on the usefulness of the Certificate in achieving these aims.

8.4 *Managing for Performance*

The Performance Planning and Review (PPR) process is an annual cycle that begins with the development of individual performance objectives, involves a mid-year review of progress and concludes with an assessment of performance throughout the year.

The PPR is mandatory and is well embedded throughout the University, particularly so with general staff for whom it has been applied longer. Faculty operational plans report an almost 100% participation in PPR and this was confirmed by the Audit Panel. This is quite an achievement. More importantly, the majority of staff are very positive about the usefulness of the PPR to their career development.

Since the establishment of the new University-level planning framework and the advent of operational plans and targets, the PPR process is increasingly being used by staff and their supervisors to identify the ways in which each individual can contribute directly to the achievement of school and faculty targets. This is already in place for senior and middle managers where PPR's directly link to agreed portfolio or organisational unit targets.

Commendation 9

AUQA commends Deakin University for the implementation of the Performance Planning and Review process which is a useful and valued tool in performance management and individual career planning.

To a large degree, the success of the PPR depends on supervisors being well prepared for facilitating constructive discussions with their staff and there is an ongoing need to ensure sufficient training and support for them. The University intends to introduce a mentoring program in 2005 to develop and extend staff capability in people management skills and the Panel endorses this.

8.5 Workload

Workload remains a major issue for staff, particularly those establishing a research career. Each faculty has developed its own workload model, many of which are very complex. However, they are used more as counting devices than as workload management tools. Additional effort is required to ensure that workload is distributed equitably to ensure that Deakin can support staff in the range of activities required of them. There may also be benefit in faculties combining the best features of their very different models.

A group particularly important to the University's achievement of its research objectives is early career researchers, and these staff, in particular, appear to require workload relief. As mentioned in section 5.2, the workload of higher degree by research supervisors needs examination.

8.6 Measuring Staff Satisfaction

Staff met by the Audit Panel are generally very positive about the working environment provided by the University. In particular, general staff feel that their contributions to the life of the University are widely recognised and valued by both their academic colleagues and the institution as a whole.

The University has commissioned a staff satisfaction survey every two years since 1998. The proportion of staff reporting overall job satisfaction has been steadily increasing since the first survey. In 2004, 70% of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with their job. The preliminary analysis of the 2004 results shows that ratings of satisfaction have improved over the 2002 survey results in all areas.

9 RESOURCES, INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES

The Strategic Plan includes the following primary objective with respect to resources, infrastructure and services: “to ensure that the human, financial and capital resources of the University are managed efficiently and effectively; that infrastructure and services are provided to meet the University’s needs; and that profitable revenue is increased to strengthen Deakin’s immediate and longer term capacity to fulfil its mission, core commitments and goals” (p.14).

The Infrastructure and Services Functional Plan 2004-2006 was in draft form at the time of the audit.

9.1 *Managing Service Relationships*

In the mid-1990s administrative divisions within the University implemented a management framework consistent with the Australian Quality Council’s Business Excellence Framework. Several Divisions subsequently undertook evaluation under the Business Excellence Awards system. The current framework being used focused on four areas; namely service performance; financial performance; customer satisfaction; and people and culture. This has proved to be a useful tool in continuous improvement.

Administrative Support Divisions reporting to the Vice-President (Administration) each have a Service Management Plan which details the services to be provided and the service standards that can be expected. These plans effectively operate as Service Level Agreements. Administrative Support Divisions undertake monitoring against service standards each month and report biannually to the Vice-President (Administration) on achievement of service standards. This system operates very effectively.

One Division has maintained ISO 9001 certification since 1996 and another Division was seeking certification at the time of the audit.

In 2004 PRC included administrative areas within the University external review policy. None had been initiated at the time of the audit, but it is intended that they will normally be conducted on a five-yearly cycle.

9.2 *Library*

Library services are provided by Learning Services and a library operates at each campus.

The services provided by the Library received considerable praise from both staff and students alike. This was particularly the case for those from the Warrnambool campus who reported that where books were held at another campus they could reliably and relatively quickly be obtained.

The breadth and depth of the collection is generally found to be sufficient to support students and research activity, although in some discipline areas the collection is not strong. As the Library increases its holdings of online journals, access is noticeably improving and this is appreciated. Off-campus students met by the Panel were positive about the library services provided to them.

The Panel heard a minority of comments from students about some unhelpful and unfriendly library staff but this was outweighed by the generally very positive experiences in interacting with library staff.

9.3 Information Technology

User response to the information technology services and support provided by Deakin were generally less favourable from students and staff than for library services. The IT Helpdesk service has been found to be unreliable and the University is making changes to improve this area which are endorsed by the Panel.

An example of an innovative application of technology is the use of SMS messaging for the return of student examination results. This has been introduced successfully and is appreciated by students.

As the University moves to increasingly integrate online teaching technologies (see also section 3.6) it will be vitally important that the IT services are effectively integrated into planning for teaching as well as for research. The University plans to review the Information Technology Services Division in 2005 and the Panel endorses this intention.

9.4 Student Services

The Division of Student Life provides a range of support services to students including academic and personal counselling; recreation and health services; disability resources and support; and housing and student loans. Deakin Central, located prominently at each campus, is a one-stop shop for student enquiries.

One of the major programs co-ordinated by the Division is the 'First Year at Deakin' program which aims to support students in their transition to studying at the University. The program commenced in 2001 as the First Year Initiative as an attempt to improve retention rates, especially of first year students and it has been successful in achieving this.

Its scope has been expanded now to include students who may not necessarily be entering as first year students but are new to Deakin. The 'First Year at Deakin' program is surveyed annually. The 2003 survey highlighted a number of areas for improvement that are now being acted upon by the Division. Its action plan indicates the manner in which the Division is attempting to respond to the demographic characteristics of the University's students and their information needs.

APPENDIX A: DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

History and Location

Deakin University was established in 1974 as a 'university in the Geelong area'. The Geelong campus at Waurn Ponds, 11 kilometres west of Geelong's central business district, was where teaching first began at the University in 1977.

Following mergers in 1990 with the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education and in 1991 with Victoria College, Deakin University now operates across five campuses in Geelong (Waterfront and Waurn Ponds), Warrnambool (260 kilometres south-west of Melbourne) and Melbourne city (Burwood and Toorak). The Geelong Waterfront campus, opened in 1996, serves as the University's head office. This campus emerged from an award winning reconstruction of an old woolstores building.

Academic Profile

The University is structured into five faculties (Arts; Business and Law; Education; Health and Behavioural Sciences; Science and Technology) each of which is headed by a Dean. Education and training is available at undergraduate and postgraduate levels covering the disciplines in these faculties and including professional courses, mid-career professional development courses and postgraduate studies by coursework and research. DeakinPrime provides education and development programs that are tailored to the needs of commercial organisations, government bodies, professional associations and industry groups.

Administrative and Support Services

Various units within the University support its academic activities; including Learning Services; the Division of Student Life; the Institute of Koorie Education; Research Services and Deakin International.

Administrative operations of the University are organised into six divisions: Academic Administrative Services; Buildings and Grounds; Financial and Business Services; Human Resources Services; Information Technology Services and Student Life.

Key Statistics

Total student enrolments (as at 31 March 2003):		31,641
Higher degree by research load (EFTSU):		660
Higher degree by coursework load (EFTSU):		3,156
Undergraduate load (EFTSU):		17,260
Total student teaching load (EFTSU):		21,076
Total staff FTE 2004 (including casual staff):	Academic:	1,049
	General:	1,654
	Total:	2,703
Total revenue (for year ended 31 December 2003):		\$354.6m
Total expenditure (for year ended 31 December 2003):		\$333.2m

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

Mission:

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

Values:

AUQA will be:

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

Objects:

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Emeritus Professor Mairéad Browne, University of Technology, Sydney

Professor HK Cheong, Deputy President, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Ms Robyn Harris, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Professor Adrian Lee, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement), University of New South Wales (Panel Chair)

Professor James Taylor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Learning), University of Southern Queensland

Observer: Ms Dorte Kristoffersen, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

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

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CPI.....	Council Performance Indicators
DSO	Deakin Studies Online
DUSA	Deakin University Students Association
EFTSU.....	equivalent full-time student unit
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
HDR.....	higher degree by research
HRSD	Human Resource Services Division
IT	information technology
FTE.....	full-time equivalent
MCEETYA.....	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MIBT	Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology
PPR.....	Performance Planning and Review
PRC	Planning and Resources Committee
PREP	Performance Review, Evaluation and Planning
RPA	Research Priority Area

The following definitions of the terms 'unit' and 'course' have been adopted by Deakin University and are used throughout this Report:

Unit.....	A thematic component of study, normally one or two semesters long, having a value ranging from one to eight credit points.
Course	A set of units comprising credit points to a particular value, approved by the Academic Board and Council, which when satisfactorily completed normally entitles a student to the award of the appropriate certificate, diploma or degree.

