

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
Insearch Limited

September 2009

AUQA Audit Report Number 82

ISBN 978 1 921561 17 7

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

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of these governments.

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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

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

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

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

The Audit Process

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

HEP audits under the HESA consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, firstly, the institution's objectives; and, secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The four QAFs are set out in the Handbook referred to above (and in the AUQA Audit Manual). Their primary purpose is to provide the HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance. In the report of its self review (the Performance Portfolio or Portfolio), Insearch reported against the QAFs, following the categories of the institution's Quality Management Framework. The chapters in this Report use the four main topic headings provided by the QAFs. Within each chapter, the criteria for each individual QAF are addressed, but usually in an aggregated way rather than criterion by criterion.

On 15 May 2009, Insearch presented its submission to AUQA, comprising a 58-page Performance Portfolio and supporting materials compiled in relation to the individual QAF criteria. NSAI HEP audit panels generally meet by teleconference, but as the members of this Panel were in Victoria at the time of the Portfolio Meeting, the Panel met in Melbourne on 10 June 2009 to consider these materials and plan the audit visits.

Insearch is located in central Sydney, and offers higher education programs in Shanghai, China and English programs in Vietnam. (This audit does not include English language programs which are outside

the remit of higher education). On 15 June 2009, the Panel Chairperson and Audit Director visited the partner Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce (SILC) in Shanghai. On 16 June 2009, the Chair and Audit Director had a meeting with the Managing Director of Insearch in preparation for the Audit Visit. The main Audit Visit to Insearch took place from 27–28 July 2009.

The Audit Panel spoke with over 100 people during these visits, including the senior management, board of directors, managers, staff, adjunct staff, students and external stakeholders. Sessions were also available for any member of the Insearch community to meet the Audit Panel but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 28 July 2009 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the institution as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of Insearch's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance, its effectiveness or shortcomings.

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

Quotations taken from, and references to, the four core sections of the Portfolio and supporting materials are identified as (PF p) or (SM p).

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other relevant comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

Insearch Limited (Insearch) is a wholly owned entity of the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). The audit has provided Insearch with the opportunity to assess its performance and identify areas for development and improvement. There has been an institutional frankness and openness to the audit process. As a recently established higher education institution, much has been achieved in the last couple of years.

There have been significant changes at Insearch since 2006, most notably an institutional renewal at the strategic, governance, management and operational levels. There have been important changes in the relationship with UTS, including a restructure of the Insearch Board and its committees. It will be important for Insearch to formalise in a concise way the purpose of Insearch and communicate this to UTS staff and prospective students. Insearch is the preferred pathway partner for UTS. As the relationship with UTS matures and becomes more complex, it may be necessary to formalise this relationship through the use, for example, of service level agreements.

Insearch has significantly strengthened its academic leadership and governance, indicating a shift from a primarily business-driven model to a greater prominence of the educational objectives of Insearch. This has been supported through developing a quality management framework which will assist the institution to formalise and systematise its quality assignment practices.

There is evidence that Insearch is taking a holistic view of teaching and learning as is appropriate for a higher education provider. The program development and review process is well managed, the quality of teaching is evaluated and steps are taken to address any identified concerns. Recently, attention has been given to formalising academic policies and processes. A number of student support structures and systems are in place. Supporting at-risk students is adequately covered by the Progressive Assessment Notification system.

Insearch assures its academic standards through a range of strategies, including its entry requirements (especially the level of English language which it is currently reviewing), qualifications and teaching experience of its academic staff, monitoring of teaching quality, assessment and moderation policies, and more recently, by formally tracking graduates' academic performance at UTS. This tracking has revealed that Insearch students have a lower average academic performance than non-Insearch students in UTS degree programs. This has been recognised as an area which requires analysis and intervention in order to improve performance. Insearch also makes use of the external academic expertise at UTS and industry professionals to develop and review its programs.

While the Panel has no significant concerns about the quality of education received by transnational education students at SILC in Shanghai, China, Insearch is unable to adequately assure itself through the Academic Board of educational equivalence and academic outcomes, including the approval and monitoring of SILC student results and completions. The re-registration and reaccreditation of the diplomas by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, as well as the AUQA audit, provide an opportunity for Insearch to revisit the contractual arrangements with SILC and to clarify partner obligations and accountability. Any plans for closer cooperation between UTS and Shanghai

University, consistent with the aspirations of the Chinese Ministry of Education regarding foreign schools, may also influence the Insearch and SILC relationship. AUQA recommends that Insearch take steps to assure its Board on the equivalence in the diploma programs and to ensure appropriate quality assurance systems at SILC are implemented and monitored.

Overall, Insearch has provided evidence of a thorough self evaluation and satisfies the Quality Assurance Factors.

Commendations

- 1. AUQA commends Insearch for the positive way in which it has engaged with the recent wide-ranging changes at the governance, management and academic levels.7
- 2. AUQA commends Insearch for the strong, collaborative and inclusive leadership of the senior management team.....7
- 3. AUQA commends Insearch for the introduction and use of the Progressive Assessment Notification system to identify and support at-risk students.14
- 4. AUQA commends Insearch for putting in place professional development initiatives for general staff.22
- 5. AUQA commends Insearch for putting in place systems and processes to collect and analyse key institutional data.....25

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- 1. AUQA affirms Insearch’s efforts to reshape its organisational culture beyond a business ethos, and locate its culture also within a higher education context.....12
- 2. AUQA affirms Insearch’s intention to review the management of channel partners (agents) to assure effectiveness and efficiency of the agent process.14
- 3. AUQA affirms Insearch’s intention to regularly update its procedures to support at-risk students and improve its processes for reporting and monitoring at-risk student identification and intervention, to ensure that it has the appropriate allocation of human resources.....15
- 4. AUQA affirms Insearch’s intention to review its approach to student evaluations and communicate the results to students.16
- 5. AUQA affirms Insearch’s tracking of Insearch graduates studying at UTS to identify the reasons for the lower pass rates in some programs and put strategies in place to improve pathway student success.17
- 6. AUQA affirms Insearch’s clarification and formalisation of academic management positions and responsibilities, and encourages their comprehensive embedding in the development and delivery of the diploma programs.....21
- 7. AUQA affirms Insearch’s intent develop and implement a performance and development process for academic staff.22

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Recommendations

1.	AUQA recommends that Insearch formalise its statement of purpose, develop a concise message and communicate this widely at UTS and externally.....	7
2.	AUQA recommends that Insearch update and approve the risk management register, including academic risks, and ensure that it is regularly updated.....	8
3.	AUQA recommends that Insearch review the process of approving Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce student results and completions before conferring awards.....	10
4.	AUQA recommends that Insearch strengthen the relationship with UTS at the operational level through the use of appropriate mechanisms.....	10
5.	(urgent) AUQA recommends that Insearch review and clarify the contractual and operational arrangements with Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce to ensure the equivalence of academic provision and academic standards.....	11
6.	(urgent) AUQA recommends that Insearch take steps, including the review and strengthening of the course equivalence Moderation Policy, to enable it to assure its Board that equivalence in the diploma programs and appropriate quality assurance systems at SILC are implemented and monitored.....	20

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Insearch Services Pty Ltd was established in 1976 by the New South Wales Institute of Technology, later to be known as the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), to provide consultancy services to the corporate sector. In the late 1980s Insearch commenced offering intensive English language courses to international students. In 1991 the Institution offered business diploma programs which provided a pathway into the second year of study in the Bachelor of Business degree at UTS. Subsequently a range of other diplomas were offered. In 1994, Insearch entered into an education joint venture partnership with the University of Shanghai in China, known as the Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce (SILC). From 2001, Insearch discontinued its consultancy services and focused exclusively on providing diploma and English pathway programs to domestic and international students, the majority of whom were preparing for entry into UTS degree programs.

In the period 2002–2003 Insearch underwent a review of its brand identity which led to a new vision, mission and values statement, and included the adoption of the UTS:INSEARCH logo which signalled the relationship between UTS and its controlled entity, Insearch Limited. Insearch Limited was registered as a private higher education provider (HEP) in 2004 to deliver five higher education diploma programs. Also in this period, Insearch signed agreements with other international partners to offer Insearch English language programs.

As a consequence of an AUQA audit of UTS in 2006, the UTS Council had the constitution of Insearch Limited amended and the Insearch Board restructured to ensure appropriate University control and the alignment of Insearch's strategic activities and decision-making processes with University objectives. This also led in 2007 to the reorganisation and change of leadership of Insearch's senior management team (SMT).

On 31 March 2009 Insearch had 1505 EFTSL in higher education diplomas on the Sydney campus, and 677 EFTSL at SILC in Shanghai. At Insearch in Sydney there are currently 69.5 FTE academic staff members, of whom 126 are casual part-time academic staff. There are 104 FTE academic staff at SILC, who are also involved in the delivery of other programs. Insearch is exploring with UTS a longer term location of its campus within the University precincts, but is currently leasing properties in the vicinity of UTS. Insearch plans to increase its student numbers annually by 10 per cent until 2011.

There have been significant changes at Insearch since 2006, most notably an institutional renewal at the strategic, governance, management and operational levels. There have been important changes in the relationship with UTS, including a restructure of the Insearch Board and its committees; regular meetings between the Managing Director and the UTS Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; the strengthening of academic leadership; the development and formalisation of policies and procedures; and the clarifying of the roles and responsibilities of management, operational and academic staff. In particular the Panel noted the robust leadership offered by the new senior management team (SMT) which has carefully managed the transitions at the governance (including academic), administrative and academic levels. This strong leadership was apparent to the Panel as it conducted the audit. The Insearch Board expressed its confidence in the new directions of Insearch and its senior management.

There has been an institutional frankness and openness to the audit process, including a demonstrated responsiveness to produce requested documentation and evidence. It is evident to the Panel that in the context of significant change, the audit has provided Insearch with the

opportunity to assess its performance and identify areas for development and improvement. As a young higher education provider, much has been achieved in the last couple of years. This has been accompanied by the commitment of academic and administrative staff to support the success of students. During interviews, the Panel found staff and students to be engaged and honest.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends Insearch for the positive way in which it has engaged with the recent wide-ranging changes at the governance, management and academic levels.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends Insearch for the strong, collaborative and inclusive leadership of the senior management team.

1.1 Institutional and Educational Objectives

Insearch sets out its vision, mission and values in the Strategic Plan 2008–2010. Its key objectives can be found in Appendix A of this Report. Its main role in higher education is the provision of pathway diploma programs. The mission of Insearch is aligned to this goal:

The mission of Insearch is to enable students to achieve success through providing them with high quality education. By doing this Insearch will also assist UTS by ensuring articulation of quality students, and making donations to the University.

The Portfolio states that Insearch's '...purpose has been evolving over time...' and that it is working towards a formal statement of purpose (PF p7). The Panel found widespread consistency from staff and students on the underpinning intention of Insearch to provide quality education and prepare students for entry into university through pathway programs. It is not clear to the Panel that it is equally understood outside of Insearch. One of the objectives of the roadmap in the revised Strategic Plan 2009–2011 is to refine and communicate externally Insearch's purpose and values as an education provider, especially in relation to UTS which sees Insearch as its preferred pathway provider. Given the many changing purposes of Insearch since being established in 1976, and its recent status as a private higher education provider, a strong and concise message may assist in communicating the brand to external stakeholders at UTS and in the market place.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that Insearch formalise its statement of purpose, develop a concise message and communicate this widely at UTS and externally.

The strategic objectives in the Building Sustainable Growth Strategic Plan 2009–2011 are:

1. Grow star and secondary markets
2. Invest in the UTS:INSEARCH brand
3. Leverage the UTS partnership
4. Invest in developing and improving our systems, processes and facilities
5. Build a capable and engaged workforce
6. Identify new growth opportunities

Each objective has identified targets and measures, with specific initiatives to achieve these. Not all targets have identified dates of completion. Insearch should allocate responsibility to individuals for the achievement of specific objectives, targets and initiatives. The Panel finds that Insearch has developed a strategic plan with clear targets but might consider a stronger focus on educational quality objectives and associated resource allocation.

The strategic plan forms the basis for a detailed annual business plan. The 2009 Business Plan is data driven and closely linked to the annual budget. Once again, it has no explicit allocation of responsibility for achieving the objectives or their elements. There is increased attention to academic issues (such as developing a quality management system; collaborating with UTS in curriculum development, and review and tracking of its graduates at UTS; enhancing teaching facilities; and developing online learning systems), but the document is largely focused on financial, market, human resources, growth opportunities and administrative matters. Individual non-teaching staff work plans are developed on the basis of the annual plan, with tasks, time frames and measures. The Panel suggests that the academic realignment mentioned elsewhere in this Report, could be better reflected within the Business Plan.

1.2 Institutional Governance

1.2.1 Board of Directors

Insearch is governed by a Board of Directors, which comprises four UTS nominated directors, four directors independent of UTS including the Managing Director. The Chairperson of the Board is currently an independent member of the Board. The Board has responsibility to ensure Insearch conforms with company policies, including adherence to the legal and ethical framework within which the institution operates. The membership of the Board has a useful balance of skills and expertise, including academic, business and diplomatic experience.

The Panel received comprehensive documentation for its meetings, including the minutes of the Academic Board. Insearch is currently developing a 'dashboard' of strategic information for monitoring purposes by the Board. It was reported that the dashboard is progressively being developed. The Panel suggests that as part of this development the Board consider the inclusion of more academic data, such as student performance. The Panel was informed that the Board will conduct a review of its performance in 2010, and encourages the Board to consider conducting annual reviews of its performance for improvement purposes and as a component of its approach to quality management.

Risk management has been identified by the Board and management as an area for attention and ongoing work is continuing. The Panel noted, however, that the most recently approved risk register was submitted to the Board's Audit Committee in 2006. A review by the Audit Committee in June 2008 led to new strategies, a new Risk Management Policy was developed, a Business Continuity Plan was drafted, a disaster recovery plan was identified for development, and the risk management register was to be reviewed for approval by the Audit Committee in September 2009. The Panel was informed that the register is currently being reviewed and updated. The Panel encourages Insearch to formalise its register with some urgency and ensure that appropriate attention is also given to academic risks. This would necessitate the involvement of the Academic Board and its committees.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that Insearch update and approve the risk management register, including academic risks, and ensure that it is regularly updated.

The Panel formed the view that Insearch has all the key governance and management elements in place for Insearch's Sydney operation. While there is emerging evidence of good governance and management, given the recent appointments within a new structure, it will be important to monitor Board and management performance for quality improvement purposes.

1.2.2 Academic Board

Insearch has significantly strengthened its academic leadership and governance, indicating a shift from a primarily business-driven model to a greater prominence given to the educational objectives of Insearch. Whilst this is still in process, the following strategies and steps have been taken: the appointment of the General Manager for Education, the appointment of program managers, formalising the role of the subject coordinators and clarifying the role of the Academic Board and its committees.

The Academic Board has an external chairperson, external members mainly from UTS and representatives from the Insearch management, teaching staff and students. Some of the Insearch representatives are observers. The Board's main role is advising on the development of new academic programs, assuring the quality of academic programs, approving academic policies, and monitoring student performance and completions. The Academic Board is represented by the Managing Director on the Insearch Board. The Academic Board conducted a review of its performance in December 2008. It will be important that Insearch ensures that this happens on a regular basis.

The Academic Board is aware that it is responsible for setting and monitoring academic standards, and reporting these to the Insearch Board. Insearch is encouraged to continue with its efforts to ensure that internal staff capacity is strengthened through knowledge and skill transfer from external Academic Board members.

The Quality and Curriculum Committee (QCC) meets twice a semester and alternates meetings between the approval of student academic results and the examining of teaching and learning quality. The course advisory committees have recently been established. A review of the QCC meeting minutes indicate that reporting to the Academic Board is developing well. Data are being used to inform decisions and monitor progress, but there are opportunities to explore more ways of interrogating and using the data.

The Panel heard from members of Academic Board that they would like to provide more input into the strategic directions and academic planning processes. This point also emerged as a result of the Board's 2008 self-assessment and is noted in the Academic Board minutes dated 6 April 2009.

Academic Board normally approve student completions and recommend that an award be conferred. The Panel confirmed that this occurs for Insearch Sydney students, but not for SILC graduates. While the Panel has no concerns about the quality of education received by SILC students (section 2.7), it notes that Insearch is unable to adequately assure itself, through the Academic Board, of the educational equivalence and academic outcomes of programs at SILC, including the approval and monitoring of results and completions of SILC students.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that Insearch review the process of approving Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce student results and completions before conferring awards.

The Audit Panel formed the view that the QCC and the curriculum advisory committees have been well conceptualised but that there is room to strengthen and use these committees for academic discussions, particularly to develop internal staff expertise.

1.2.3 Relationship with the University of Technology, Sydney

As a result of the issues raised about the relationship with Insearch to UTS in the 2006 AUQA audit of UTS, a number of governance and operational changes were made to mitigate risk for the University. The governance measures were implemented during 2007 and aligned the interests of UTS and its controlled entity, Insearch Limited. The Panel noted in its 2006 Report to Parliament, the NSW Auditor-General reported positively on the Insearch governance review and subsequent actions

There is now a schedule of regular meetings between the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Managing Director and coordination of the annual planning cycles of UTS and Insearch, including the identification and formalisation of key information exchange points. Regular meetings of Insearch management staff and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and other appropriate UTS staff enable alignment of expectations and actions three times a year. These meetings also identify priority areas for improvement in collaboration between UTS and Insearch. The attendance by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at annual Insearch Board planning retreats further strengthens the working relationship.

The third strategic objective for the period 2009–2011 is to make use of the UTS partnership. There has been progress in clarifying and developing the relationship with UTS resulting in greater alignment of purpose and collaboration between Insearch and UTS. More needs to be done to embed the gains that have been achieved in recent years. As the scale of the operation grows and the relationship with UTS develops further (for example, the work done around developing the Foundation Program) more formal arrangements, such as service level agreements to clarify opportunities, responsibilities and accountabilities of each partner could be introduced. Such mechanisms will benefit the administrative, marketing, information and communication technology, and academic operations for the mutual benefit of the University and its preferred pathway provider.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that Insearch strengthen the relationship with UTS at the operational level through the use of appropriate mechanisms.

The Panel noted some instances of the use of the UTS logo in Insearch documentation alongside UTS:INSEARCH branding. Insearch is encouraged to ensure that possible confusion is removed in Insearch's documentation, and that any use of the UTS logo conforms to the relevant University guidelines.

1.2.4 Relationship with Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce

Insearch and Shanghai University entered a cooperation agreement in 1994 to establish the Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce (SILC) and to offer Insearch and Shanghai

University diplomas. Subsequently full degrees which are awarded by Shanghai University or by UTS (Bachelor of Business and master degrees) were offered under this arrangement. SILC now provides Insearch English programs, English teacher training (Certificate of English Language Teaching of Adults) and Insearch business diplomas. The Insearch business diplomas articulate directly into the UTS Bachelor of Business at SILC and in Sydney. SILC is also a platform to enable collaboration between UTS and Shanghai University.

SILC functions like a faculty of Shanghai University. A Management Committee made up of Shanghai University, UTS and Insearch staff meets biannually to oversee the operations of SILC. The Dean of SILC has the day-to-day responsibility for managing SILC. The Committee operates like a board of directors. The Committee includes four representatives nominated by Insearch (which must include UTS representatives, including one from the Faculty of Business) and five representatives nominated by Shanghai University.

The Panel heard that Insearch's relationship with SILC has changed over time to the extent that Insearch is unable to assure formally the quality and equivalence of the diplomas being offered at SILC (section 2.7). There is a lack of clarity in the relationship with SILC around communication, definition of quality assurance responsibilities, academic approvals and completions, and reporting. This must be resolved. While SILC operates as a unit of Shanghai University, subject to the regulations of its host, it is important that Insearch is able to ensure the equivalence of academic provision and academic standards for Insearch diplomas.

In order to assure equivalence, and approve and monitor student results and completions, Insearch will need to carefully consider and negotiate a number of complex regulatory environments and relationships. In China, it must consider the Shanghai University and UTS relationship, the SILC and Insearch relationship and the People's Republic of China regulatory and accreditation requirements. Locally, Insearch must consider its compliance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act), formally assuring the equivalence of its transnational education programs, and fulfil the accreditation requirements of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET). Lastly, Insearch must take into consideration that UTS relies on the flow of international students into its programs and that Insearch makes an annual donation to the University.

The re-registration and reaccreditation of the diplomas with NSW DET, and the AUQA audit provide an opportunity to revisit the contractual arrangements and to clarify partner obligations and accountability. Any plans for closer cooperation between UTS and Shanghai University, consistent with the aspirations of the Chinese Ministry of Education regarding foreign schools, may also influence the Insearch and SILC relationship. The lack of clarity of the relationship with SILC is a major quality risk for Insearch.

Recommendation 5

(urgent) AUQA recommends that Insearch review and clarify the contractual and operational arrangements with Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce to ensure the equivalence of academic provision and academic standards.

1.3 Business Management

Insearch has developed a strong business framework with a robust budgeting model and monthly financial reports which are provided to the SMT. It uses the Insearch Business Improvement Pathway process to project manage both administrative and academic processes.

The financial management of Insearch appears to be sound with regular annual donations made to UTS and the recent allocation of \$300,000 for scholarships for SILC pathway students into UTS programs.

The Panel heard in interviews that there is a need to work on the institutional culture in order to overcome the silo effect which has characterised Insearch in the past, particularly between the academic, marketing, and administrative functions, and between the sections which offer English pathway programs and the higher education diploma programs. The Panel observed significant progress made towards a change of culture and many of the longer term staff appreciate the changes which have been made. Insearch should continue its efforts to ensure that the silos between the various operations of Insearch are minimised in order to strengthen the organisational culture appropriate for a higher education provider. There is opportunity for more team building and recognition and knowledge of the work of others.

The Panel noted that since being accredited as a higher education provider, Insearch is increasingly giving attention to ensuring that the core business of Insearch, its higher education academic operations, are sufficiently strengthened and supported. An example of this is the appointing of program managers and subject coordinators. This Report includes further matters regarding academic staff in a later section.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms Insearch's efforts to reshape its organisational culture beyond a business ethos, and locate its culture also within a higher education context.

The Panel noted the attention and effort which has gone into the refurbishment of the leased buildings at Insearch. This has included creating a campus environment which provides an engaging context for student learning. In particular, thoughtful provision has been given to student recreation areas, teaching spaces and student consulting areas. No concerns were raised by interviewees about the safety of staff and students. Students indicated that they had received communication by SMS and email about caring for their personal safety and were not aware of any significant international student concerns in this regard.

2 **ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS**

Insearch's approach to teaching and learning is captured in *Teaching at Insearch: A Guide for Academic Staff*, which covers the philosophy of a student-centred approach that promotes a learning culture which values autonomous learners. The Guide covers the characteristics of the Insearch student; facilitating student learning; assessment; course progress; completion and early intervention; and academic misconduct. Action plans contained in the Insearch Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2008 are in place to drive key aspects of teaching and learning in the period 2008–2009. The Plan has 13 goals, with a number of subsidiary actions with timelines, allocation of responsibilities and measures of progress. The Panel noted that a number of actions had been completed or were being undertaken. The Panel suggest that Insearch regularly update the Plan to drive innovation and improvement, as well as to keep abreast of new developments and areas for improvement.

There is evidence that Insearch is taking a holistic view of teaching and learning as is appropriate for a higher education provider. The program development and review process is well managed, the quality of teaching is evaluated and steps are taken to address any identified concerns. Recent attention has been given to formalising academic policies and processes. A number of student support structures and systems are in place. The Panel noted that teaching and learning, assessment and moderation are guided by policies and procedures, and training materials are provided to academic staff.

2.1 ***Admissions and Progress***

2.1.1 Admissions

Insearch's entry requirements are determined during the program development and accreditation process and are constantly monitored against equivalent courses at other institutions. The Panel noted that the procedures for the Setting/Amending Entry Requirements for Academic Programs Policy and Procedure do not explicitly include the Academic Board's approval in the adjusting or re-endorsing of entry requirements, but that a review committee (comprising the two general managers from education, and sales and marketing, and the registrar) makes a direct recommendation to the SMT. The Panel urges Insearch to review this procedure.

Information on entry requirements is available in the international and domestic prospectus, and on the Insearch website. The Registrar's office handles all student admissions, from the processing of applications and visas, to dealing with channel partners (agents) and managing compliance with the ESOS Act. Students are able to enrol through the Online Application System, which is linked to the student management system, Student One. Recognition of prior learning is managed by the academic program managers who decide, where necessary, on what credit is granted.

The approach taken to marketing and admissions includes active engagement with academic and administrative staff, and agent training. Insearch collectively names its agents 'channel partners', a public acknowledgement of the importance of the agent – provider relationship in the recruitment of students. The Insearch Channel Partner Framework guides the management of these agents. A comprehensive channel partner survey conducted with 310 agents in July 2008 highlighted areas of strength and future development. The Panel was informed that

Insearch will conduct a review of channel partners with a view to consolidating the management process. Insearch is encouraged to ensure the efficiency and adequacy of its management of channel partners.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms Insearch's intention to review the management of channel partners (agents) to assure effectiveness and efficiency of the agent process.

2.1.2 Progress and Moderation

Student progress at Insearch in Sydney is monitored by the QCC. Academic Board approves the academic results. A review of the minutes of QCC shows that careful attention is given to student academic performance. The Committee closely interrogates the pass rates in each of the diplomas, as well as monitoring the spread of marks. Subjects with high failure rates are scrutinised and actions are taken where necessary, for example changes to the teaching style, review of assessments, extra teaching and greater use of duty tutorials. There is moderation of a percentage of papers, of examination scripts and of major assignments when there is no examination. The Panel is satisfied that there are robust procedures in place to monitor student progress, including moderation protocols (Insearch-UTS Moderation and Benchmarking Process), and there is ample evidence of their effectiveness. There is increasing attention to academic standards with academic staff regularly benchmarking both input and outcomes with colleagues at UTS, as well as with other external academics or professionals.

Supporting at-risk students is covered by the Progressive Assessment Notification (PAN) system. Academics are required to report their concerns about student progress (such as non-attendance or poor performance) on the electronic system. Introduced in December 2006, this web-based system enables academics to record assessments, marks and comments onto student files on the Student One database. Given the short enrolment cycle of students at Insearch, the system has a number of benefits including making results and progress information available to students, allowing for academic advisers to identify and assist at-risk students, and provide information to subject coordinators to monitor cohort academic performance. Academic advisers then follow up with individual students. The advisers provide a range of services from follow-up with at-risk students, academic advising, and referral to other services, for example, duty tutors or professional counselling. The proactive early intervention system for at-risk students raises the chances of student success.

The Panel was advised by academics, advisers and students that the system functions well. Students who have been placed on academic caution or intention to report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship are tracked and supported. The introduction of PAN is an important aspect of academic quality monitoring.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends Insearch for the introduction and use of the Progressive Assessment Notification system to identify and support at-risk students.

Since the introduction of PAN in 2006, Insearch has identified further improvements, including the updating of course progress, completion and early intervention procedures, as well as the improvement of processes for the collection, analysis and reporting on at-risk student outcomes. The Panel concurs with these improvements and encourages Insearch to conduct an analysis of the data to monitor the effectiveness of PAN and track the adequacy of the staffing resources allocated to support at-risk students.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms Insearch's intention to regularly update its procedures to support at-risk students and improve its processes for reporting and monitoring at-risk student identification and intervention, to ensure that it has the appropriate allocation of human resources.

2.2 Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

There is a high level of awareness among staff and students about academic honesty. The Panel explored plagiarism as an example of how Insearch manages this important academic issue.

The Academic Misconduct Policy outlines the rules, responsibilities and penalties for plagiarism. Staff and students are provided with this information in the Academic Handbook, assessment task sheets, marking sheets, subject outlines (with a section on academic integrity in every outline) and the Orientation Handbook. Turnitin® software is used for both educative processes and plagiarism detection. Most Insearch students are required to complete two academic literacy subjects.

The Panel reviewed the Turnitin® statistics and originality matrix and the student appeals data. The Panel encourages Insearch to strengthen the reporting already in place and ensure that its monitoring of plagiarism cases enables it to analyse these cases and design educational interventions.

2.3 Staff and Student Grievance System

Insearch recently updated its Staff Grievance and Resolution Policy and an Informal Resolution Procedure. Staff are aware of the policy and procedure. There is a Student Grievance Policy and Procedure which is made known to students at orientation and is available in the Academic Handbook. The Panel reviewed documentation related to grievances and is satisfied that the grievance process is transparent and the system is monitored for effectiveness.

2.4 Student Satisfaction

Since 2003 students are required to complete a Studying at Insearch survey three times a year to provide student views on courses, services, facilities, staff and the educational environment (SM39 provides 2008 data). SMT reviews the results and monitors actions for improvements. Reports are also tabled at Academic Board to enable the monitoring of academic quality and make changes to academic policies, where necessary.

Each semester all teaching staff are evaluated by students. A statistician compiles a summary report which includes a report for each individual academic. Academic managers review the reports and the individual reports are forwarded to the relevant academics. The QCC also receives the report from the quality analyst (education) showing trend data. The QCC uses these data to make improvements, as well as to identify good practice in teaching. Where poor teaching is signalled the program manager provides support and the academic is encouraged to participate in the peer partnership program. Program managers provide regular updates on teaching performance interventions to the QCC.

The Panel confirmed with management, academic staff and students that the student satisfaction system is functioning well. Changes made as a result of student evaluations include establishing the duty tutorials, creating a student activities coordinator role, and improving the

physical facilities. The Panel heard of some ad hoc instances of feedback to students on changes to courses at the beginning of the semester. Insearch may want to consider ways to provide more formal feedback to students on changes made to subjects or other adjustments to the academic program made as a result of student evaluations, for example in the subject outlines.

Other formal feedback is obtained from the student activities coordinator, the student council and the learning development coordinator (who gathers feedback from 'duty tutorials', student orientation programs and student activities through the use of surveys and focus groups).

The Panel concurs with Insearch that it should review its approach to student feedback to make optimal use of the data for improvement purposes and communicate the results and improvements made to students. Insearch must ensure that it monitors not only the number of evaluations completed by students on both courses and teachers, but also the percentage returns for statistical and inferential purposes, sometimes called 'face validity'. Insearch could also consider benchmarking its student satisfaction data where feasible.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms Insearch's intention to review its approach to student evaluations and communicate the results to students.

The Panel notes and supports Insearch's intention to develop and implement an exit survey based on the Course Experience Questionnaire to use for quality improvement purposes.

2.5 *Scholarship and Creative Activity*

Since becoming a higher education provider, Insearch has devoted greater attention to fostering critical enquiry among its students through new approaches to pedagogy (to a learner centred approach) and assessment. Teaching practices have been reviewed and teaching methods were revised to include tutorials and workshops. Inquiry-based assessment tasks in some instances replaced examinations. The Panel confirmed that students are encouraged to engage in their learning in a range of ways, through teamwork and the use of critical thinking. As the benefits of tutorials for students is partly related to the group size, the Panel encourages Insearch to continue to monitor and track the optimal size of tutorial groups in the various subjects and programs.

The Portfolio indicates that consideration is being given to graduate attributes (PF p11). This terminology is likely to be more appropriate to graduates of degree programs and perhaps there needs to be more emphasis on skills for learners in preparation for a pathway to university. The Panel suggests that Insearch hold a discussion on what it intends by 'graduate attributes' and consider a set of agreed generic skills and learning skills.

There are a number of mechanisms in place to promote professional peer association with academics outside of Insearch, particularly with UTS staff. Insearch will need to give further thought to how it promotes and ensures discipline currency and scholarship among its academic staff (particularly full-time academic staff) which is appropriate to the Institution's objectives and character (QAF 2.10) (section 3.1). An integral part of promoting scholarship is scheduling regular academic discussions in academic committee meetings to build expertise and institutional capacity (section 1.2).

2.6 *Academic Standards*

Insearch assures its academic standards through a range of strategies, including its entry requirements (which are currently under review), qualifications and teaching experience of its academic staff, monitoring teaching quality, assessment and moderation policies, and more recently, by formally tracking its graduate academic performance at UTS. Insearch also makes use of external academic expertise at UTS and industry professionals to develop and review its programs.

The Panel reviewed the data provided on the academic performance of Insearch graduates at UTS (PF p52). Insearch has only recently had access to UTS COGNOS Business Intelligence Reports to track student performance in UTS undergraduate degrees compared with non-Insearch students. Aggregated graduate tracking data from 2008 shows that while the Insearch student pass rates against direct entry students have improved in 2008, they are on average 9% below UTS direct entry students (Data Item 5.1) although there are some courses where student performance is better than non-Insearch students. International students from Insearch perform at about the same level as Insearch domestic students (Data Item 5.2). A disaggregation of the results by faculty shows some variation in the performance by Insearch graduates (Data Item 5.3). Engineering student pass rates for 2007–2008 show that Insearch graduates performed better than other students in the Engineering faculty. Student performance is lower in the disciplines of business; information technology; nursing, midwifery and health; and science. Overall, COGNOS data shows significantly improved performance of Insearch graduates in the Bachelor of Business and other UTS courses since 2006, indicating that the quality improvements have been having a positive effect (data items 5.4–5.6).

Following the Insearch Academic Board being made aware of the increase in failure rates in the Bachelor of Business in 2006, Insearch took steps to better prepare students for study not only in the Bachelor of Business but all courses at UTS into which Insearch graduates articulate.

The Panel heard from Insearch and UTS interviewees that the Insearch graduate performance data at UTS are now being better monitored by Insearch. While possible reasons for student underperformance, for example professional language needs, were provided to the Panel, further probing is needed. It will be important for Insearch to investigate and analyse the data further, for example to disaggregate the data to UTS pass rates by year of study. Benchmarking the performance of Insearch students against that of a comparable group of non-English speaking background domestic and international students may provide a more accurate reflection of student progress. Insearch may also consider collaborating with UTS to conduct focus groups with volunteer students to better understand any barriers to their good performance. This could enable Insearch to introduce changes to entry requirements, programs, or pedagogy in the diplomas to increase the academic success rates of its graduates.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms Insearch's tracking of Insearch graduates studying at UTS to identify the reasons for the lower pass rates in some programs and put strategies in place to improve pathway student success.

Insearch is also encouraged to continue to track retention and attrition data of Insearch graduates at UTS.

Besides UTS, Insearch has had student articulation agreements since 2007 with Curtin University of Technology and the University of Wollongong.

2.7 *Transnational Education – SILC*

On the basis of the visit to SILC, the Panel observed Insearch's approach to transnational education and its management of academic quality. As an initial comment by the Panel, it is important to state that there are no major concerns about the quality of the staff, the facilities, the teaching quality and the quality of the student experience at SILC. The Panel noted a high level of student English language ability. Students who were interviewed seemed satisfied with their experience and their pathway opportunities.

Section 1.2.4 has already addressed the governance and management relationship with SILC, in the context of the UTS and Shanghai University relationships. Section 1.2.2 has addressed Academic Board's role to approve academic results and completions (including the QCC's role to review, analyse and recommend approval of student results and completions).

In this section, the Panel comments on the management of quality and the ability of Insearch (Sydney) to assure itself formally of the equivalence of Insearch diplomas offered at SILC. The Panel determined that work needs to be done to strengthen the relationship with SILC, particularly to improve the administrative relationship. It appears to the Panel that Insearch, until 2007, did not closely manage the relationship with SILC, and as a consequence SILC increasingly acted independently of Insearch in the management and quality assurance of its programs. Insearch recognises that to more closely comply with the Australian regulatory environment, it needs to improve the relationship and build on the strengths of both parties.

The Panel reviewed the report on SILC to the Insearch Board, and the minutes of meetings of the SILC Board and SILC Academic Management Committee.

The Panel observed the following arrangements at SILC:

- SILC has a high quality campus facility.
- SILC has a highly qualified academic staff.
- Administrative processes for students appear to be sound.
- All marketing material is approved by Insearch.
- About 1000 students apply for entry but only 500 can be accepted into the diplomas.
- 99% of students live in residences on the campus.
- Shanghai University policies are followed at SILC, which presents a challenge to Insearch to ensure alignment of academic policies governing the diploma.
- Class sizes are around 60 students (but up to 100), and there are between 20-35 students in a tutorial which is based on Shanghai University standards, as this is a faculty of the University. This will require some attention by Insearch.
- The English language proficiency of the students interviewed was very good.
- Student support at SILC appears to be very good. There are 13 advisers and 17 counsellors (a mixture of full-time and part-time).
- Two types of professional development are available for staff: the first through Shanghai University and the second through academic staff summer visits to Insearch and UTS. Insearch and UTS visiting lecturers also provide professional development opportunities to local SILC academics. There does not appear to be any formal reciprocal professional development opportunities for Insearch staff at SILC. Academic staff receive induction and professional development at Shanghai University. In 2009, five academic staff have attended professional development opportunities at Insearch and UTS. The focus has been on pedagogy with a focus on a student-centred approach.

- Shanghai University student evaluations are used. This presents problems for Insearch to track student feedback in the diplomas between Sydney and SILC for comparative purposes.

The Panel identified the following areas for attention and improvement:

- Quality and Curriculum Committee reports to Insearch Board. Alignment between this committee and the SILC Academic Management Committee is necessary.
- After a review of the minutes of the SILC Management Committee meetings, the Panel considers that management meetings seem not to give sufficient emphasis on the Insearch diplomas.
- Greater clarity is needed with regard to the alignment, academic management, and communication in the offering of the Insearch diplomas. This has just formally begun.
- Attention will need to be given to ensure the equivalence of assessment outcomes. There are no data providing comparison between the performance of Insearch and SILC students, but there has been a recent effort to enact such comparison.
- There is some concern from the Panel around moderation of assessment because there are different marking regimes where 50% constitutes the pass mark at Insearch and 60% at SILC. A systematic benchmarking process is being implemented. However there is a danger that the SILC students could be disadvantaged if the marks are simply scaled over 50% instead of 40%. That is, 10% of the students who fail at SILC would have passed in Sydney. The Panel is unable to comment on the comparison of student performance between SILC and Insearch Sydney students. This is an area requiring urgent attention by Insearch.
- At-risk students are identified after a student fails the semester (following the Shanghai University procedure). It was reported that students have academic mentors who monitor their progress throughout every course of their diploma and intervention is made to support at-risk students. Insearch will need to assure itself that the identification and support of at-risk students at SILC is equivalent (even if slightly different) to the processes provided at Insearch.
- In the next twelve months all teaching staff must have an IELTS of seven as a minimum. Insearch will need to assure itself that this has occurred.
- Risk management seems to apply to business risks and health risks, but there is little attention to academic risks. This was an issue raised in a 2005–2006 SILC accreditation document.
- Students are aware of academic honesty and plagiarism issues, but were not aware of the disciplinary procedures and penalties. Academic staff reported that plagiarism presents a challenge for Insearch students at SILC. There is no access to plagiarism detection software.
- There is still a major problem with the handling and security of student records. Student records have only recently been transferred to Insearch. It is important that Insearch receives enrolment and progression data regularly. In the absence of these data, it is problematic for Insearch to issue testamurs or to track performance of parallel cohorts.
- Only recently has SILC put the course outlines into the Insearch online system.
- The content of courses is not the same. (This was a finding identified for attention during an Insearch internal audit in 2005.) There is a need to develop a common understanding of what constitutes a learning outcome. In this regard, the Course Equivalence Policy is a key document which must be implemented.
- It is not clear that the language of instruction is always in English.
- There is a lack of sufficient knowledge by Insearch of the quality assurance arrangements on a day to day basis to enable Insearch to assure itself that there are adequate controls over academic processes and outcomes.
- SILC has yet to make its website available in English.

There is a Moderation Document dated April 2009 which is intended to formalise a number of the above processes. Moderation in this context means alignment of the course outcomes, curriculum requirements, and the employment of qualified teaching staff. Insearch must ensure that the document is strengthened to address a number of the above issues, and especially the matter of standards.

Insearch is currently seeking reaccreditation for its diplomas from the NSW DET, which will involve approval of offshore offerings through SILC. Some of the above issues will of necessity need to be addressed as part of the reaccreditation process. Insearch must also urgently and systematically address the issues which present significant risks to Insearch as it is unable to formally assure the Board of Directors and other stakeholders that there is equivalence of provision in the programs and adequate management and monitoring of the transnational education quality assurance arrangements.

Recommendation 6

(urgent) AUQA recommends that Insearch take steps, including the review and strengthening of the course equivalence Moderation Policy, to enable it to assure its Board that equivalence in the diploma programs and appropriate quality assurance systems at SILC are implemented and monitored.

Insearch is encouraged to consider benchmarking its relationship with SILC against other successful partnerships in the sector.

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

3.1 *Organisational Structure and Decision Making*

The Panel finds that Insearch's recently developed structures for decision making are generally functioning well. Staff interviewed by the Panel commented that the recent attention to position descriptions and the performance and development review for non-teaching staff enabled them to be clear about their responsibilities. Chapter 1 of this Report comments on the management of Insearch, including areas for improvement.

3.2 *Academic and Administrative Staff*

The Panel finds that there are adequate recruitment and induction processes in place for both academic and administrative staff.

Insearch recognised that prior to 2008 insufficient attention was given to ensuring that there were an adequate number of full-time academic positions to ensure academic continuity and quality assurance of the higher education programs. Already in 2005, a number of program NSW DET accreditation reports required that Insearch employ appropriately qualified full-time core academic staff to provide coordination and leadership in the diploma programs.

There are now a number of academic positions which address these concerns, including the positions of the general manager for education, an academic manager, program managers and subject coordinators. There may need to be a reconsideration of the definition of 'full time' academic staff as it is unusual to have academic leaders on short contracts and it is understood that program managers are on two year contracts. The lead time required to implement the planned growth and development requires staff with longer employment contract periods. The Panel suggests that Insearch consider ways to provide greater security of employment for its academic managers which will contribute to academic stability. Similarly, attention may need to be given to lengthening the employment contracts of subject coordinators beyond one semester, in order to provide better continuity and ensure continuity of academic expertise and leadership at subject level. The appointment of program managers is a significant development and the role of subject coordinators is similarly an important element in academic leadership and quality delivery.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms Insearch's clarification and formalisation of academic management positions and responsibilities, and encourages their comprehensive embedding in the development and delivery of the diploma programs.

Induction is provided to general staff and newly contracted academic staff teaching at Insearch. Insearch has successfully developed position descriptions for both the operational and educational departments, with identified key performance indicators. There is an operating performance and development process which was introduced in 2008 for non-teaching staff, which is linked to individual staff work and development plans. The Panel confirmed that general staff have individual work and development plans and that staff are making use of

development opportunities. It is intended to develop a similar process for academic staff by mid-2010.

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms Insearch's intent develop and implement a performance and development process for academic staff.

The Panel noted that there are professional development activities provided to academic staff in the area of teaching and learning, and that academic staff value the activities and find them useful. The difficulty, however, is that they are not linked to work plans. The Panel also noted the need to strengthen discipline-specific and ongoing scholarly development. The Panel encourages Insearch to consider ways to support academic staff to ensure disciplinary currency.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends Insearch for putting in place professional development initiatives for general staff.

Affirmation 8

AUQA affirms Insearch's intent to extend professional development initiatives to academic staff in their discipline specific areas.

A staff engagement survey was conducted in 2008, partly due to the high non-teaching staff turnover in 2006–2007. Steps have been taken to assess and address staff engagement, including improving communication and the next survey is due in the second half of 2009. It appears to the Panel that the considerable governance and management changes of the last 18 months at Insearch warrant another survey and that the results might, in fact, reflect the progress made by Insearch. The Panel suggests that the data from the next survey be analysed carefully and that some other instruments, benchmarking or inputs from other higher education institutions be used as well to enhance Insearch's understanding of the results and improvement actions. The Panel found staff in the interviews to be very engaged.

The Panel is satisfied that appropriate attention is given to monitoring teaching quality and that a range of mechanisms are available to program managers to identify good teaching practice as well as to address poor teaching. Systems are in place to improve teaching practice including academic development forums, teaching and learning seminars and workshops, the Education Weekly Bulletin, teaching excellence awards, and peer and mentor programs.

There is a policy to regulate the number of hours which a staff member can teach. The Panel heard that the system of maximum teaching hours is in need of improvement. The Panel concurs that the teaching hours must be better monitored in order to assure the quality of teaching.

3.3 Student Services

Insearch has the expected range of services to support students with administrative, financial, accommodation and pastoral support. One of the functions of academic advisers is to provide a referral service for students. The Panel was provided with data on the student use of UTS counselling services. Insearch staff work with UTS to provide the best support services for students.

The Panel finds that student services for international and domestic students are generally functioning well. There is ongoing attention to the evaluation of services, and work is underway to address issues identified. The Panel considers that there is potential for more use to be made of the data gathered including greater analysis and interrogation to underpin decision making for planning and resource allocation purposes. In some service areas greater attention could be given to benchmarking with other institutions and establishing professional contacts to ensure that good practices are adopted and shared.

The Panel finds that members of the Student Representative Council are positive about the Council's role at Insearch and that management is interested in receiving feedback from students related to their studies and campus experience. The Panel noted the positive role played by the student activities coordinator. The Buddy system seems to be a successful strategy to help students. The Panel suggests that Insearch provide some formal induction and leadership training for the Student Representative Council, particularly their role in participating in academic processes.

3.4 Information and Communication Technology

Staff and students have access to the UTS Library and extensive online resources and databases. Staff and students indicated that it is more than adequate for their needs.

Insearch has invested in ensuring that its information and communication technology infrastructure is adequate for the present and future needs of Insearch. An online student enrolment system has recently been completed. A number of projects are under way or planned, for example to implement a Student One upgrade, which will include a Student One based course information system, redevelopment of the staff website and student intranet, and a review of the use of eStudent and UTS Online. It is important that the ICT systems at Insearch are integrated and user-friendly. The Panel heard that there is a plan to simplify the Insearch ICT architecture.

The Panel heard from interviewees that they are satisfied with the level of provision and support from IT services and the helpdesk. While there is a four year replacement cycle, students who were interviewed noted some difficulties in using ageing equipment in the teaching areas, where difficulties are related to the compatibility of the audiovisual equipment with newer technology. Students also complained about having to use different learning management systems. Insearch is encouraged to find ways to rationalise the system to enable it to be more user-friendly for staff and students.

Of more urgent concern to the Panel is the transfer and security of student data from SILC to Insearch. Insearch must ensure that there are systems in place for the secure transfer of data from SILC.

Affirmation 9

AUQA affirms Insearch's recognition of the need to update ICT systems which will make them user-friendly and facilitate better use of data for analysis, decision-making, planning and monitoring purposes.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

4.1 *Quality Management*

Insearch has made a concerted effort in the last couple of years to streamline its business practices and formalise Insearch's policies and procedures, both administrative and academic. A number of documents were developed to guide this process, including the Policy and Procedure Development Process. Rules and procedures underpin the template in the development of policies and procedures. The Panel reviewed a selection of policies and procedures for their alignment with Insearch's objectives and consistency of approach. The Panel notes that some policies have yet to be developed and approved.

Affirmation 10

AUQA affirms Insearch's intention to develop and approve identified policy gaps.

A second document which has been developed in 2009 is the Compliance Management Program which recognises the importance of regulatory compliance, including compliance with the ESOS Act, for ethical, legal and reputational reasons. The Panel finds that there have been positive benefits for Insearch in the development of policies and procedures, and that compliance issues are being better codified, managed and monitored.

In May 2009, Insearch documented a working draft Quality Management Framework (QMF) which outlines a PDRI (plan, do, review and improve) approach to continuous quality improvement. As a part of this Framework, Insearch documented in March 2009 the Insearch Business Improvement Pathway (IBIP) which provides Insearch's project management principles and methodology.

Insearch makes use of a Quality Tracking and Improvement (QTI) system which covers the five areas of Insearch's activities: governance, strategic planning, student focus, workforce focus, systems and procedures. The QTI identifies processes, structures and planned improvements. The Panel encourages Insearch to consider separating out the academic processes from the administrative and business processes to ensure that there is adequate control and oversight over academic priorities and processes by the Academic Board and the academic leaders of the Institution.

The Panel recognises that Insearch is at the beginning stages of embedding a quality management system across the institution. The Framework locates quality improvement at the centre with external compliance and standards as part of the quality system. As the quality system is implemented and embedded, it will be important to ensure that this system is appropriate to the size and objectives of the Institution and does not become over-complex or too elaborate, that it develops in such a way that it takes into account that Insearch is an Institution offering higher education programs while not compromising business dimensions, and that it is adapted to the norms of higher education.

Affirmation 11

AUQA affirms Insearch's intention to approve and implement the Quality Management Framework across the Institution.

The Panel heard that the Framework is a 'living document' and brings together the various aspects of the quality assurance and improvement measures already in place in a systematic way. There appears to be a greater strategic and operational transparency emerging from all this recent work, including the attention which has been given to internal communication with staff. The Panel finds that as Insearch has recently put many systems and processes in place, it is too early to comment on their results. It will be important for Insearch to ensure that it continues to monitor its data and outcomes, and regularly conducts integrated analyses of data for use for strategic planning, decision making and improvement purposes.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends Insearch for putting in place systems and processes to collect and analyse key institutional data.

Affirmation 12

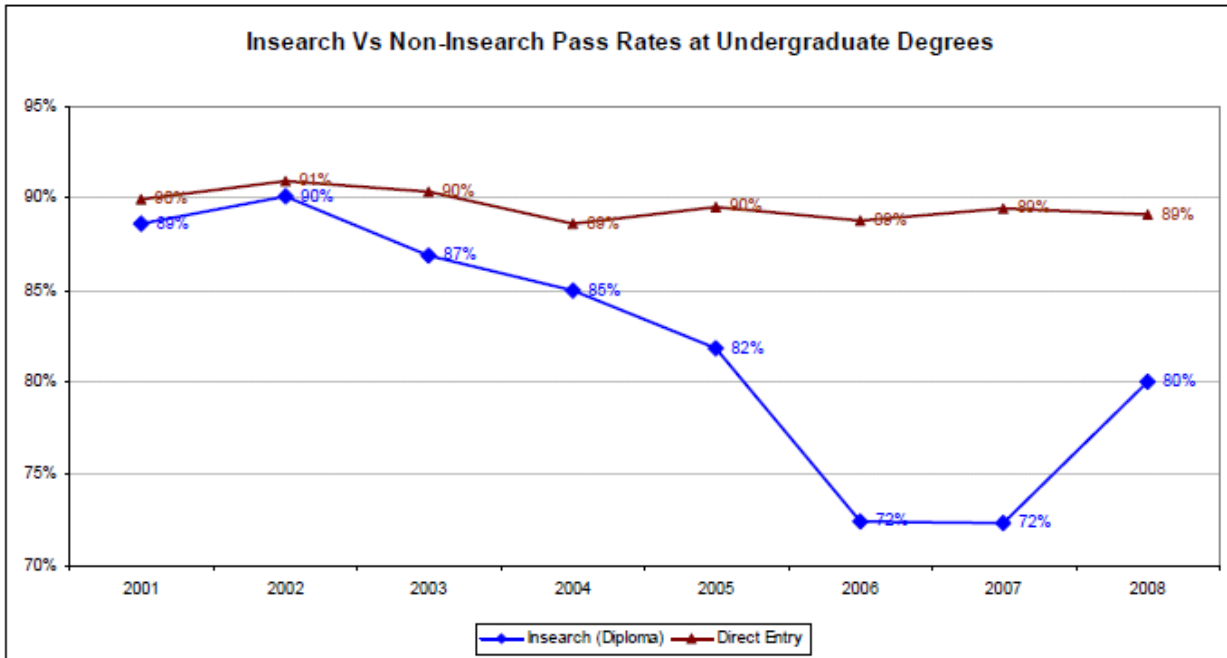
AUQA affirms the steps taken by Insearch to monitor data and outcomes, and encourages it regularly conduct integrated analyses of data for use for strategic planning, decision making and quality improvement purposes.

The Panel noted that there is an awareness emerging among staff of the need to ensure and enhance the quality of Insearch's activities. In addition to quality assurance and improvement in academic matters, the Panel noted a similar attention to quality processes in operational areas. The Panel suggests that Insearch encourage more non-academic staff to engage with peers from similar organisations other than UTS.

The Panel noted that there are a number of benchmarking activities, formal and informal, which occur at Insearch. Some of these are aligned to formal reviews. In order to enhance Insearch's quality assurance processes, an Institution-wide approach to benchmarking, aligned with the Institutional objectives and supporting the review of core activities should be considered.

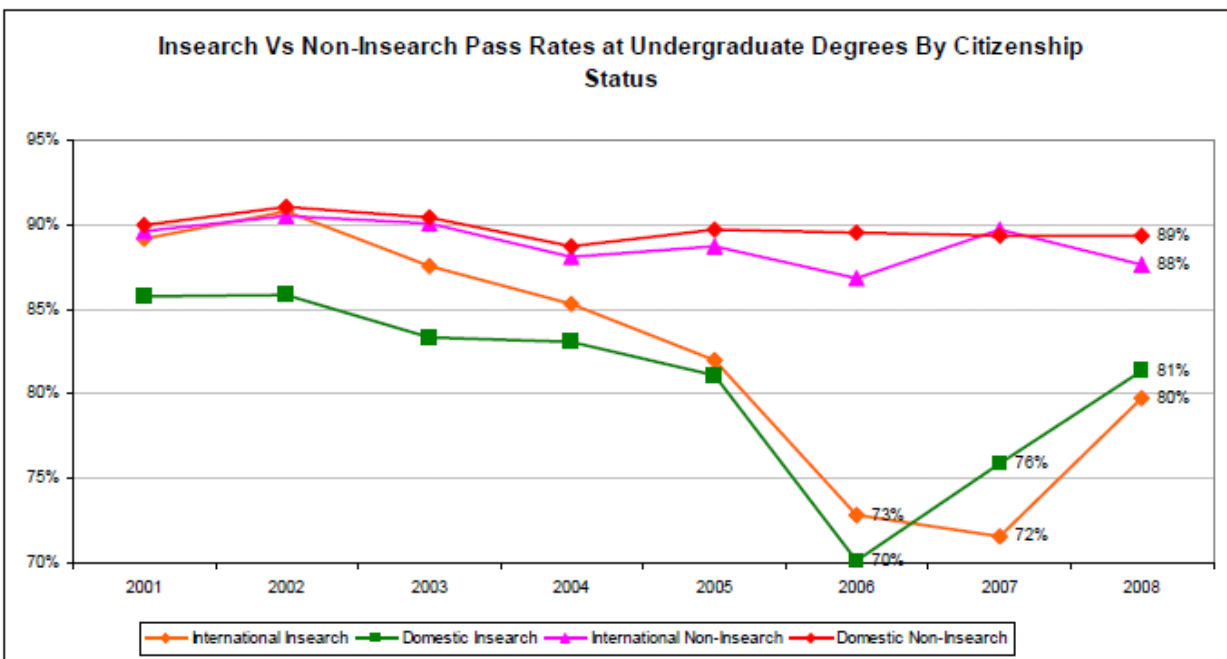
5 DATA

Item 5.1 Insearch vs non-Insearch pass rates at undergraduate degrees at UTS



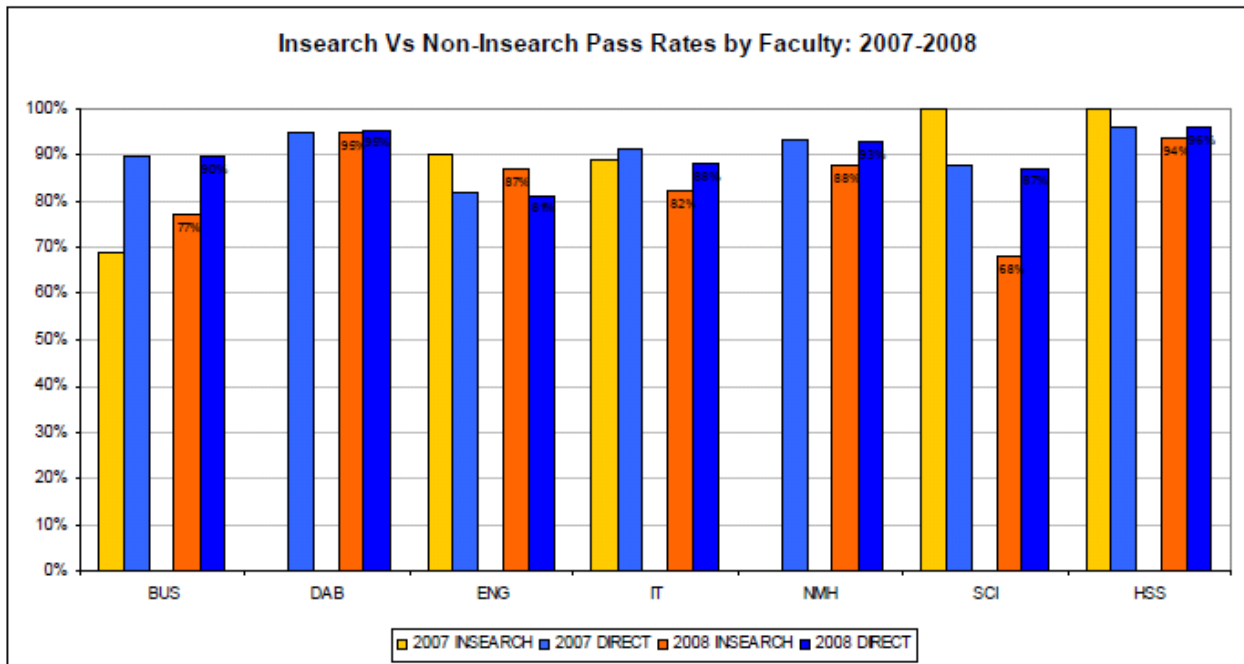
Source: Articulation and Graduate Tracking Reports to Senior Management Team (SM53) p2.

Item 5.2 Insearch vs non-Insearch pass rates at undergraduate degrees by citizenship status at UTS



Source: SM53 p2.

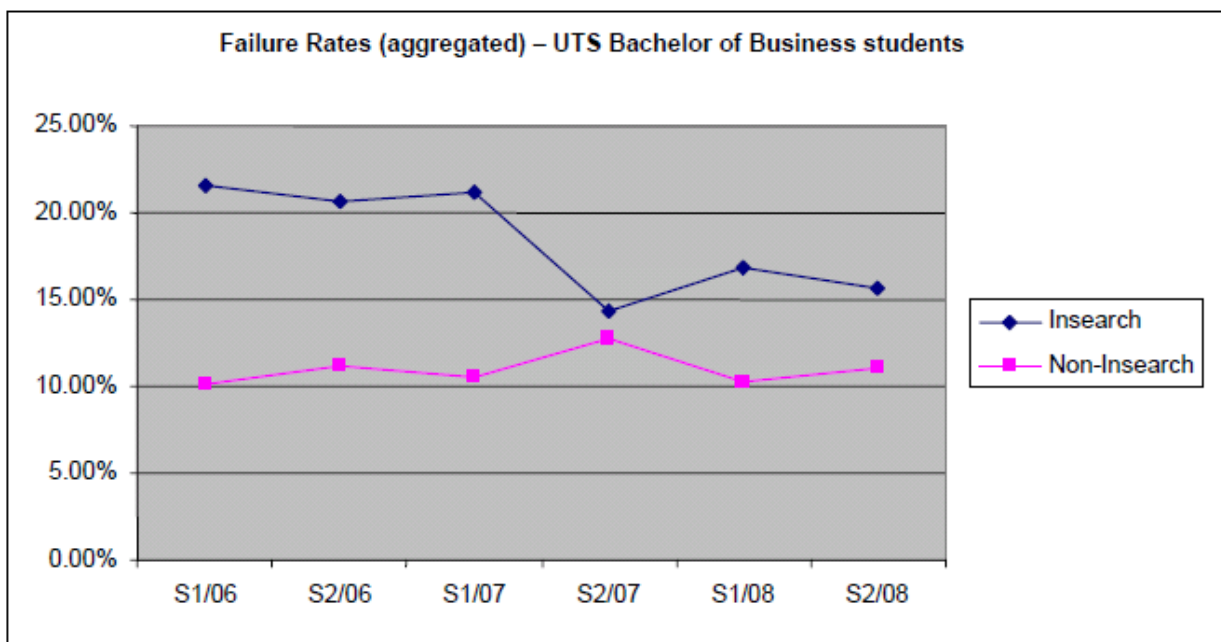
Item 5.3 Insearch vs non-Insearch pass rates by faculty: 2007–2008 at UTS



Source: SM53 p3.

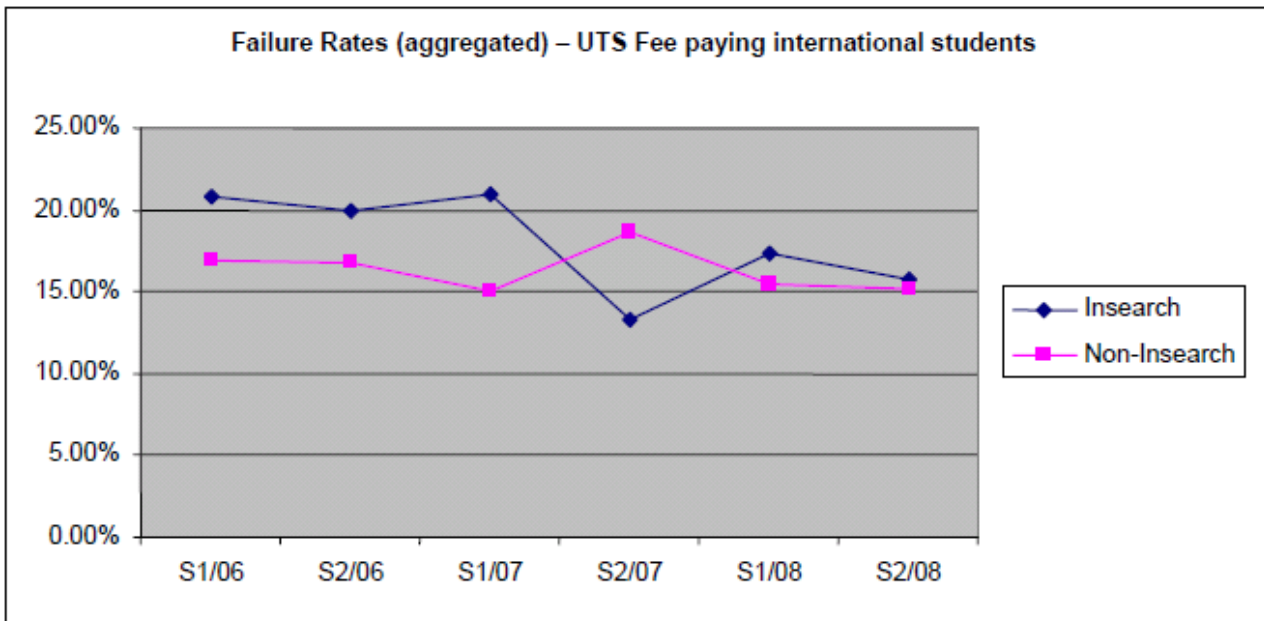
- BUS – Faculty of Business
- DAB – Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building
- ENG – Faculty of Engineering
- IT – Faculty of Information Technology
- NMH – Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Health
- SCI – Faculty of Science
- HSS – Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Item 5.4 Failure rates (aggregated) – UTS Bachelor of Business 2006–2008



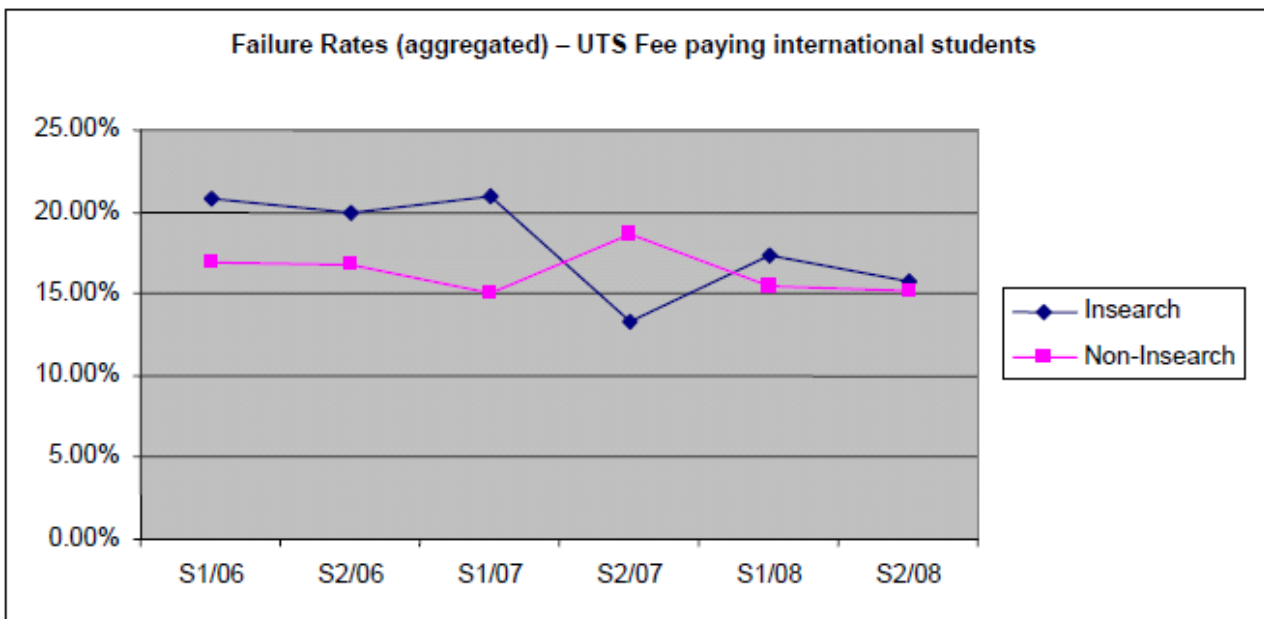
Source: Insearch.

Item 5.5 Failure rates (aggregated) – UTS fee paying international students 2006–2008



Source: Insearch.

Item 5.6 Failure rates (aggregated) – UTS Commonwealth supported students 2006–2008



Source: Insearch.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INSEARCH LIMITED

Preamble

Insearch Limited is a registered higher education provider and accredited provider of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). Insearch provides higher education pathways into the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) degree programs. Insearch Limited was established in 1976 by the New South Wales Institute of Technology (NSWIT) to provide consultancy services to the corporate sector. In 1988 NSWIT was reconstituted as UTS, by which time Insearch had started to offer intensive English language courses to international students. In 1991 Insearch enrolled students in business diploma programs leading into the second year of study in the UTS Bachelor of Business. Subsequently, the range of diploma programs expanded to include Communication, Design, Information Technology and Science and Engineering. In 2001 the consulting business was transferred back to UTS.

In 2003 the decision was made to more closely align the brand of Insearch's Sydney-based campus with the UTS brand. This included the development of a new vision, mission and values statement, the adoption of the UTS:INSEARCH logo and development of a look and feel more compatible with the UTS visual identity.

In 2004 Insearch was registered as a private higher education provider with newly accredited higher education diploma programs.

A result of an AUQA recommendation in the audit of UTS in 2007, the constitution of Insearch Limited was amended and the Board was restructured, with the aim of ensuring that UTS had an appropriate level of control over Insearch's strategic direction and decision making.

Vision

The vision of Insearch is to be a leading international provider of education services.

Mission

The mission of Insearch is to enable students to achieve success through providing them with high quality education. By doing this Insearch will also assist UTS by ensuring articulation of quality students, and making donations to the University.

Academic Profile (accredited higher education awards)

Diploma of Business and Commerce
Diploma of Science and Engineering
Diploma of Information Technology
Diploma of Design – Visual Media
Diploma of Communication

Strategic Objectives

Insearch's strategic objectives for 2009-2011 are:

1. Grow star and secondary markets
2. Invest in the UTS:INSEARCH brand
3. Leverage the UTS partnership
4. Invest in developing and improving our systems, processes and facilities
5. Build a capable and engaged workforce
6. Identify new growth opportunities

Values

There are four core Insearch values:

- **Benchmark**
We set the standard in student outcomes, quality, experience and innovation.
- **Supportive and Aware**
We support student and staff by being aware of and attending to peoples' needs.
- **Connected**
Our success is enhanced by our connections to successful partner institutions, organisations and people.
- **Makes a Difference**
We change the lives of students and staff by opening up new learning and career paths.

Insearch Key Statistics as at 31 March 2008 and 31 March 2009

2008	Sydney	SILC, Shanghai
Total number of student enrolments EFTSL	2130	882
Total higher education student enrolments EFTSL	1505	677
Staff numbers FTE		
Academic	66.38	101
English Language teaching	43	n/a
General	81	50
Total	190.38	151

2009	Sydney	SILC, Shanghai
Total number of student enrolments EFTSL	2322	957
Total higher education enrolments EFTSL	1581	754
Staff numbers FTE		
Academic	69.5	104
English Language teaching	48.6	n/a
General	88.7	50
Total	206.8	154

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

Mission

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

Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

Vision

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

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

Values

In its external relations, AUQA will be:

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

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Mr Kevin Brett, Consultant

Dr Mark Hay, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Professor Barbara van Ernst AM, Consultant & former Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community Engagement) and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Swinburne University of Technology (Chair)

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CELTA	Certificate of English Language Teaching of Adults
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL.....	equivalent full-time student load
ESOS Act	<i>Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000</i>
FEE-HELP	FEE-HELP is a loan given to eligible fee-paying students to help pay part or all of their tuition fees.
FTE	full-time equivalent
HEP(s).....	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
IBIP.....	Insearch Business Improvement Pathway
Insearch	Insearch Limited
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now disbanded)
National Protocols	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
NSW DET.....	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
PAN	Progressive Assessment Notification
PDRI	plan, do, review and improve
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
QA.....	Quality Assurance
QAFs.....	Quality Audit Factors
QCC.....	Quality and Curriculum Committee
QMF	Quality Management Framework
QTI	Quality Tracking and Improvement
SAI(s).....	Self-Accrediting Institution(s)
SILC	Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce
SM.....	supporting material
SMT.....	senior management team
UTS.....	University of Technology, Sydney

