

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of
Tabor College (Vic) Inc.

June 2010

AUQA Audit Report Number 95

ISBN 978 1 921561 33 7

© Australian Universities Quality Agency 2010

Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne, VIC 3000

T: 03 9664 1000

F: 03 9639 7377

E: admin@auqa.edu.au

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

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.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT	1
Background	1
The Audit Process.....	1
CONCLUSIONS.....	3
Introduction to Findings.....	3
Commendations	4
Affirmations.....	5
Recommendations	5
1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE	7
1.1 Institutional Objectives and Strategic Planning	7
1.2 Institutional Structure and Governance	8
1.3 Academic Governance	9
1.4 Testamurs.....	10
1.5 Internal Reviews.....	11
2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS.....	12
2.1 Admission and Progress	12
2.1.1 Admission	12
2.1.2 Attrition and Progression Rates	12
2.2 Partnerships	13
2.3 Teaching and Learning	14
2.3.1 Teaching Arrangements	14
2.3.2 Modes of Delivery	16
2.4 Monitoring and Improvement	16
2.4.1 Moderation of Assessment	16
2.4.2 Improvements to Teaching and Learning	16
2.4.3 Plagiarism	17
2.5 Research and Scholarship	17
2.6 Culture of Critical Inquiry	18
3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING.....	19
3.1 Organisational Structures and Decision Making.....	19
3.2 Academic and Administrative Staff.....	19
3.2.1 Staff Development	19
3.2.2 Staff Workload	20
3.2.3 Staff Appraisal	20

3.3	Support for Student Learning.....	21
3.4	Information Resources	21
4	MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.....	22
4.1	Review and Evaluation	22
4.2	Benchmarking and Data	23
4.3	The Quality Management System.....	23
5	DATA	26
	APPENDICES	29
	APPENDIX A: TABOR COLLEGE (VIC) INC.	29
	APPENDIX B: AUQA’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VISION AND VALUES.....	30
	APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL	32
	APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS.....	33

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 (HEPs). Although other institutions also provide higher education, the term 'HEP' is commonly used to denote only non self-accrediting higher education providers and the term is used in this sense in this Report. HESA requires that HEPs in receipt of FEE-HELP funds must meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audits by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines. HEPs continue to be subject to registration and accreditation by their respective state or territory government accrediting authority.

This Report of the audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) of Tabor College (Vic) Inc. (Tabor Victoria or the College) provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, and its commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A brief introduction to the College, including its mission and values, and key statistics 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 definitions 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* (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 government accreditation authorities, so quality audits of HEPs do not include a detailed examination of the academic quality assurance processes for programs of study.

HEP audits, under 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), the College reported against each of the QAFs. The sections in this Report use the four main topic headings provided by the QAFs, as well as a data section. Within each section, all the criteria for that QAF are addressed, but usually in a holistic way rather than criterion by criterion.

On 29 January 2010, Tabor Victoria presented its submission to AUQA, comprising 55 pages in three chapters, plus appendices and supplementary material, with Chapter 3 consisting of a report against the individual QAF criteria. The Panel met by teleconference on 19 February 2010 to consider these materials.

The College has its campus in Ringwood North, Melbourne, Victoria. Tabor Victoria also provides higher education units and vocational education and training (VET) courses through its partner CityLife Church, and VET courses only through its partner Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH), both of which are located in Melbourne. Summer Institute of Linguistics Australia, trading as EQUIP Training, also offers units to

Tabor Victoria students. These units form part of the linguistic stream of Tabor Victoria's Bachelor of Arts award.

The Audit Visit took place from 17 to 19 March 2010. In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 60 people during the Audit Visit, including members of the Tabor Victoria Board and the Academic Board, the Principal, the Academic Registrar, senior staff, adjunct staff, students, graduates, representatives from educational partners and external stakeholders. Sessions were also available for any member of the Tabor Victoria 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 19 March 2010 and does not take into account any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by Tabor Victoria as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of Tabor Victoria'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 audit 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 approach, deployment or results, which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by Tabor Victoria, 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 the Portfolio are identified as (PF p).

CONCLUSIONS

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

Introduction to Findings

Considering Tabor Victoria's institutional and educational objectives, AUQA commends Tabor Victoria on its success in conducting a wide-ranging self-review that considered, in depth, the challenges facing the College at present and in the future and the changes required for the College to meet these challenges. The Tabor Victoria Board and senior management team have embraced an innovative vision for growth that aims to move beyond the College's traditional realm of theology and ministry to provide a range of courses within a supportive Christian environment. Innovation in the College can be seen in the development of the Unit Guide Basic Online Outline Tool (UGBOOT). The UGBOOT enables the College to maintain close quality control over unit guides and assessment, while its integration with eMinerva, the College's student information system, and Moodle, the College's online learning management system, provides efficiency benefits to staff and students alike.

The Panel commends the Tabor Victoria Board for taking a very active role in the governance and strategic direction of the College, providing active support for senior management in its efforts to secure the College's future.

Students and graduates gave an almost unanimous endorsement of the quality of teaching from academic staff, and in particular their ability to foster critical thinking in students. These comments reflect an institutional culture that is strongly supportive of students.

Nevertheless, there are areas that Tabor Victoria recognises as needing improvement. The College acknowledged that more structured support needs to be given to research and scholarship and to professional development, particularly if the College's longer term aspiration for self-accrediting status is to be achieved. The College also recognised the need to improve campus facilities, either through improvements to the current campus or relocation, and Tabor Victoria hopes that a decision can soon be reached in this regard.

A key area for improvement is the functioning of the Academic Board, which needs to take a more active role in academic governance based on expanded terms of reference. A more systematic approach to teaching and learning is needed through the adoption of a teaching and learning plan, among other initiatives.

The practice of 'multi-streaming', that is of having in the same class both VET and undergraduate, or undergraduate and postgraduate students, is an issue which needs serious reconsideration. Tabor Victoria also needs to ensure that its higher education testamurs meet regulatory requirements, and that academic staff generally have qualifications at the appropriate AQF level for the courses they are teaching.

Staff management is another area to which the College should direct its attention. It is not uncommon for staff workload to be an issue in small colleges such as Tabor Victoria, and the issue should be dealt with through a formal workload policy. Performance appraisal needs to be linked to Tabor Victoria's strategic objectives and include areas such as teaching and learning and research and scholarship.

While Tabor Victoria has put in place various quality assurance mechanisms, for example the UGBOOT, the College now needs to develop benchmarks and key performance indicators, and make better use of

data. Existing mechanisms and those to be developed need to be brought together to form a quality management system with clearly articulated roles for relevant staff and College bodies such as the Academic Board and the Academic Standards Committee.

The College would benefit from a regular cycle of course reviews and its course committees and external stakeholders should play an active role in this continuous improvement to course curricula and delivery.

The risk management framework developed by the College is insufficiently detailed and staff are insufficiently aware of academic risk in a context where future growth of the College is predicated on forming educational or strategic partnerships to grow course offerings.

A summary of commendations, affirmations and recommendations follows. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

1. AUQA commends the Tabor Victoria Board for its commitment to the good governance of Tabor Victoria, including carefully monitoring the sustainability of the College and providing active support for senior management to pursue a creative and innovative vision for growth aimed at securing the College's future.9
2. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for undertaking a genuine and in-depth self-review that has resulted in ongoing improvements to the operations of the College.11
3. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its flexible approach to course provision, which enables students to pursue their studies in a manner suited to their needs.16
4. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for strong approach to plagiarism, both in terms of prevention, through educating students, and in addressing instances of plagiarism, through effective tracking via eMinerva and a clearly articulated policy for dealing with instances of plagiarism.17
5. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its culture of open intellectual inquiry which is helping to develop its students' capacities for critical thought and reflection, and their tolerance and respect for alternate views.18
6. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its student-centred approach to higher education and for its institutional culture of student support.21
7. AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its in-house development of the Unit Guide Basic Online Outline Tool (UGBOOT) and the integration of the Tool with eMinerva and Moodle, which will provide an online platform for the College to closely monitor and continuously improve course content and delivery.24

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms Tabor Victoria's plans to address issues relating to the comfort of its physical facilities either through alterations following a longer term commitment to the current campus, or through relocation to another suitable campus.8
2. AUQA affirms Tabor Victoria's objective to improve opportunities for academic staff to engage in research, and to foster a culture of scholarship.18
3. AUQA affirms the intention of Tabor Victoria to improve its provision of professional development to staff by aligning it with their professional responsibilities.20
4. AUQA affirms the intention of Tabor Victoria to improve staff appraisal through: better linkage to staff professional development; the inclusion, in the case of academic staff, of research and scholarly outcomes; and, refocusing on task effectiveness.20

Recommendations

1. (urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria revise the constituent documentation setting out the function and responsibilities of the Academic Board, increasing the frequency of meetings, and including the following matters in its terms of reference: quality assurance of academic programs; teaching and learning; monitoring of student and graduate data; benchmarking; and, moderation of student assessment.10
2. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria seek formal advice from the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority regarding the compliance of its testamurs with regulatory requirements.11
3. (urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria incorporate educational partnerships and academic risk into its risk management framework, and that the Risk Register include specified actions to prevent or act on risks.14
4. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop regulations regarding the multi-streaming of courses so as to clarify, for staff and students, the different characteristics and objectives of VET, undergraduate and postgraduate courses and ensure that when multi-streaming occurs teaching methods, student experience and assessment methods are appropriately differentiated for students studying at different AQF level awards.15
5. (urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a systematic approach to the improvement of teaching and learning through the development of a teaching and learning plan that addresses, among other things: indicators of teaching quality; regular external moderation of assessment; allocation of resources for teaching; and, qualifications of teaching staff.17
6. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria ensure manageable workloads for all staff by developing a staff workload policy that takes account of the multi-faceted roles that are undertaken by many staff members.20
7. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a process of regular, formal course review and evaluation that includes input from its course committees and external stakeholders.22

- 8. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a more rigorous, formal approach to the collection and analysis of data and to external benchmarking, with a focus on continuous improvement.23
- 9. AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a more integrated and systematic quality management system that clearly delineates the quality assurance roles and responsibilities of relevant individuals and college bodies and which takes account of key performance indicators to determine and monitor improvements.....25

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Tabor College (Vic) Inc. was established in 1988 as a campus of Tabor Australia, which commenced operations in Adelaide in 1979. Tabor Victoria became independent of Tabor Adelaide in 2005 and is now responsible for the design and accreditation of its courses. In 2009 Tabor Victoria was re-registered as a higher education institution for a period of five years.

At the time of the Audit Visit Tabor Victoria indicated that it employed 24 staff and had over 350 students (data items 5.1 and 5.2), the majority being part-time, with an EFTSL of 178 (Appendix A and data items 5.3 and 5.5). The College's EFTSL enrolments have grown steadily from 2005 until 2008 (data item 5.6). Tabor Victoria's campus is located at Ringwood North in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

Tabor Victoria's history, profile and objectives are elaborated under 'History and Academic Profile' and 'Mission and Values' at Appendix A.

1.1 *Institutional Objectives and Strategic Planning*

The College sets out its vision, mission and values in its Five Year Strategic Plan 2008–2012. Tabor Victoria's mission is stated in the following terms:

The mission of Tabor College (Vic.) is to empower God's people to transform the world, by providing tertiary education in a multi-denominational, charismatic and evangelical context.

The vision of Tabor Victoria is to be 'a leading Christian Tertiary Education provider in Australia known for Academic excellence and creativity in studies of the arts, counselling, education, humanities and commerce' (Strategic Plan p2).

The multi-denominational nature of Tabor Victoria is well-understood and seen as a major asset by the Tabor Victoria Board, senior management, staff, students and external stakeholders.

The senior management team and the Tabor Victoria Board have a clear vision to grow Tabor Victoria as a multi-denominational College offering an increasingly broad range of courses beyond its original focus on theology and ministry but within a supportive, Christian environment. Tabor Victoria has developed strategic partnerships to assist in teaching higher education courses and/or course development with EQUIP Training, CityLife Church, Eastern University in the USA, and Transformation, Empowerment, Advocacy, Relief (TEAR) Australia, a Christian-based aid and development organisation. The Principal now has a clearly delineated strategic role that includes the development of partnerships and investigating ways of diversifying Tabor Victoria's income beyond tuition fees, an important consideration for a College that is unable to fall back on denominational support. Tabor Victoria has begun to apply for grants and is considering ways of earning a commercial income.

Tabor Victoria's Ringwood North Campus is currently leased from a church on what was once the grounds of an old church camp. The facilities have been adapted to the College's needs including transforming the old dormitories into staff offices. However, the Campus lacks air-conditioning or heating and is in need of improvements. Staff and students would like to improve the physical facilities, and in particular the lack of heating or cooling. On the other hand, the leafy grounds of the College are appreciated by the College community. The Tabor

Victoria Board and senior management recognise the need to improve campus facilities. The Principal is currently investigating a number of options, including a longer term commitment to the current Campus, in which case the Campus could be renovated or improved, subject to funds; or relocation to another suitable campus.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms Tabor Victoria's plans to address issues relating to the comfort of its physical facilities either through alterations following a longer term commitment to the current campus, or through relocation to another suitable campus.

1.2 Institutional Structure and Governance

Tabor Victoria is incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981* (Victoria). The Association is governed by a Statement of Purposes and a set of Rules which set out its purposes and the powers. Pursuant to section 30 of the *Associations Incorporation Act*, the Association holds an annual general meeting to approve the Association's accounts. The affairs of the Association are managed by the Tabor Victoria Board, with membership of the Association and the Board being the same.

The Tabor Victoria Board comprises eight members external to the College, including the Chair and Deputy Chair, and two ex-officio members, the Principal and the Executive Director of Operations. The external members of the Tabor Victoria Board have a mix of business, church and ministry experience. The Tabor Victoria Board meets bimonthly, while the executive subgroup comprising the Chair, Deputy Chair, Principal and Executive Director of Operations, and a finance subcommittee, meet monthly.

The frequency of meetings and the business backgrounds of many Tabor Victoria Board members enable the Board to closely monitor the College's financial sustainability, which has been a challenge for the College. The Tabor Board sets budgets and closely monitors financial statements and performance.

The Tabor Victoria Board also sees one of its key roles as setting the strategic direction of the College. The Board indicated to the Panel that it works closely with the Principal to ensure that the vision and direction of the College are aligned. The Tabor Victoria Board approves all partnerships, and specific strategic goals are identified by the Board in relation to the development of partnerships. The Tabor Victoria Board participated in 2009 in a two day College strategic planning retreat with senior faculty and management as part of an ongoing three year review of the whole College and its operations.

In the Panel's view, Tabor Victoria Board members have a clear strategic view for Tabor Victoria to broaden its course offerings to prepare students for a range of vocations, and to embrace new techniques of educating. In a context where the multi-denominational nature of the College has limited potential for a variety of income sources beyond tuition fees, the active role of the Tabor Victoria Board is critical to Tabor Victoria as it provides significant external oversight of the College's performance and direction, as well as an important means of monitoring the sustainability of the College. The level of voluntary commitment on the part of Tabor Victoria Board members is significant and provides valuable input into strategic planning at Tabor Victoria.

Senior management and the Tabor Victoria Board have a clear grasp of the challenges facing a small, multi-denominational Christian college and are looking closely at innovative ways to ensure the future sustainability of Tabor Victoria, through the development of new and unique courses, embracing new teaching techniques or by linking with other educational partners.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends the Tabor Victoria Board for its commitment to the good governance of Tabor Victoria, including carefully monitoring the sustainability of the College and providing active support for senior management to pursue a creative and innovative vision for growth aimed at securing the College's future.

Potential board members are invited to attend two Tabor Victoria Board meetings and are fully evaluated with regard to the contribution they may make. Potential members are inducted into the Tabor Victoria vision and the Board's processes, and after attending two meetings may be invited to join the Tabor Victoria Board.

1.3 Academic Governance

In documentary evidence supplied to the Panel and in interviews with staff, the Academic Board of Tabor was described as having overall responsibility for quality assurance and academic governance. The Academic Board has 10 members, including three external members (one of these positions was vacant at the time of the audit), a student member and six staff members. The staff membership includes the Principal, the Dean, the Academic Registrar and senior teaching staff. The Academic Board is appointed by and reports to the Tabor Board, with external appointments being made on the recommendation of Tabor Victoria staff to the Tabor Victoria Board. The Academic Board meets twice a year (once per semester), although staff indicated that there is email contact between Academic Board members to resolve out-of-session matters.

The Panel noted that while Tabor Victoria had indicated that the Academic Board has responsibility for quality assurance of the College's courses, this could be clarified by making more explicit reference to quality assurance in the Academic Board's terms of reference. The Academic Board's terms of reference indicate that the Board is concerned with: advising the Tabor Victoria Board as to those students who have met the requirements of an award; ensuring compliance with internal policies and external requirements; making recommendations and developing and refining policies regarding the development and conduct of courses; and, considering any academic matters referred to it by the Tabor Victoria Board, Principal, academic staff or any relevant committee. Although documentary evidence indicated that the Academic Board was established to monitor the teaching of Tabor Victoria courses, it is difficult to see how it can fulfil this function within its terms of reference when these do not mention teaching and learning, monitoring of student and graduate data, or benchmarking.

It was clear to the Panel that with the Academic Board meeting infrequently many of the functions typically associated with an Academic Board or equivalent body are being undertaken at Tabor Victoria by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). Described by Tabor Victoria as the 'workhorse' that develops and implements procedures, the ASC consists of the Dean and Academic Registrar, two academic staff, the two deputy registrars and the Dean's assistant. The College indicates that the ASC typically meets monthly and reports biannually to the Academic Board. Staff indicated to the Panel that the ASC monitors moderation, student

feedback, does assessments for recognised prior learning, develops academic policies for the Academic Board to approve, monitors the quality of staff teaching at partners and generally ensures quality across the College, being the channel for assessing academic matters and making improvements.

The Panel formed the view that the Academic Board of Tabor Victoria should meet more frequently in order for it to work more effectively in providing robust academic oversight, including more effective input from the external academics sitting on the Academic Board. An Academic Board that only meets twice per year could not possibly fulfil the task of ensuring that teaching, delivery and monitoring of all the College's awards are of a high standard and that quality is developed in the College aside from all the other tasks required of it. The infrequency of meetings would limit the amount of time available for discussion around matters such as teaching and learning and moderation. The lack of continuity of meetings would also be an issue since if the Chair or any other key member of the Academic Board was unable to attend a meeting in one semester that may mean that they only attend one meeting in the course of a year. Moreover, there are limits in the extent to which email correspondence can be used to discuss and resolve issues in between meetings.

While it is clear that staff on the ASC work diligently in their roles, the composition of this committee is more appropriate to a role concerned with academic processes. In terms of academic governance, Tabor Victoria needs further and more frequent active input from academics who can advise on such matters as teaching and learning strategies, approaches to moderation, monitoring of student data such as attrition rates, and benchmarking.

Recommendation 1

(urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria revise the constituent documentation setting out the function and responsibilities of the Academic Board, increasing the frequency of meetings, and including the following matters in its terms of reference: quality assurance of academic programs; teaching and learning; monitoring of student and graduate data; benchmarking; and, moderation of student assessment.

1.4 Testamurs

A sampling of testamurs raised a number of issues in terms of their compliance with the National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes (the National Guidelines).

Each of the testamurs was branded with the logo 'Nationally Recognised Training', although this logo is only applicable to VET awards. Another issue is that each testamur states that the graduate had satisfied 'the academic, spiritual and practical requirements of the College' to be awarded the relevant award. It was not clear to the Panel whether the 'spiritual' requirement mentioned in the award was an assessable component of the award and, if so, how this component was assessed.

The Panel was given a copy of a Bachelor of Arts (Applied Linguistics) testamur, although Tabor Victoria has no such award listed on the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) State Register of higher education awards. The College does have listed an accredited Bachelor of Arts and evidence supplied to the Panel indicates that students can undertake a linguistics stream in this award. The Panel observes that normally an award with a specialist stream designated on the testamur is accredited as a distinct award, and the only awards for which a testamur can be issued are those listed on state registers. The practice of using brackets in course names to indicate streams was also observed in course lists supplied to the Panel.

A final point in relation to the testamurs is that section 17.3.1 of the National Guidelines states that the 'legally constituted governing body', in this case the Tabor Victoria Board, has responsibility for conferral of an institution's higher education awards. Tabor Victoria testamurs are signed by the Principal, Dean and Academic Registrar but not by the Chair of the Tabor Victoria Board, nor is there any mention of the Tabor Victoria Board having conferred the Tabor Victoria awards. The Panel was not convinced that the Tabor Victoria testamurs viewed did in fact comply with section 17.3.1 of the National Guidelines.

Tabor Victoria staff with whom the Panel raised the issue of the testamurs were not aware of any issues raised by VRQA panels at the time of course accreditations. The Panel formed the view that Tabor Victoria should seek formal advice from the VRQA as to whether its testamurs comply with the requirements of the National Guidelines, given the issues noted above. The College should also give consideration to compliance with the Draft AQF Qualification Issuance Policy.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria seek formal advice from the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority regarding the compliance of its testamurs with regulatory requirements.

1.5 Internal Reviews

Tabor Victoria used the AUQA audit as an opportunity for self-reflection on the strategic direction of the College and areas in need of improvement. The documentary evidence provided to the Panel indicated in-depth, and at times philosophical, reflection on the current challenges facing Tabor Victoria as a multi-denominational Christian-based college, and on the pros and cons of potential models for growth.

In interviews, staff and the Tabor Victoria Board confirmed that Tabor Victoria had engaged in a genuine process of self-assessment. The Tabor Victoria Board indicated that the recent decision to create the position of Executive Director of Operations had been taken after reflecting upon how the College could be better managed. The self-review process had also enabled Tabor Victoria to reflect on significant strategic goals such as the goal of self-accrediting status, which according to the Strategic Plan was to be achieved by 2010. Senior management and other staff recognised that the goal of self-accrediting status is a longer term, aspirational goal at present but one that can help to drive the College toward further improvements.

The Panel saw evidence of authentic self review that was both extensive and in-depth and has led to real and lasting improvements in the operations of Tabor Victoria.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for undertaking a genuine and in-depth self-review that has resulted in ongoing improvements to the operations of the College.

2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

Tabor Victoria has its academic foundations in teaching theology, ministry and counselling courses but has in recent years broadened its offerings to include education and arts. The College aims to provide teaching and inculcate learning that is of high quality, and students and graduates are generally very happy with the quality of teaching of Tabor Victoria courses. While the College recognises the need for continuous improvement in teaching and learning, this is an area where Tabor Victoria currently lacks a systematic approach. Support for research and scholarship is another area that Tabor Victoria recognises as needing attention.

Tabor Victoria has developed a number of partnerships, with EQUIP Training, CityLife Church (CityLife) and UNOH the Victorian Council of Christian Education (VCCE), and TEAR Australia, and is developing links with Eastern University in the USA. These partnerships are central to the College's future growth plans. However, potential risks need to be properly managed.

2.1 *Admission and Progress*

2.1.1 Admission

Students entering Tabor Victoria do so on the basis of a required ENTER score for the relevant bachelor course, or a relevant degree in the case of postgraduate courses. Students are also generally required to demonstrate Christian maturity through references, for example from a pastor, and through an interview with staff. Though atypical, Tabor Victoria has on occasion admitted non-Christians after interviewing them and explaining the Christian foundation of the College. Interviews and references are seen as an integral part of the Tabor Victoria admission process.

2.1.2 Attrition and Progression Rates

Attrition rates at Tabor Victoria appear to be high at around 40%, though progression rates are closer to 90% (data item 5.7). In the College's view the apparent high attrition rate reflects the fact that the majority of its students are part-time and the fact that Tabor Victoria's flexibility enables students to start or continue on a course by picking up only one unit, which is effectively a course load of 0.25. On the whole Tabor Victoria was unable to give the Panel a clear explanation of its rates of attrition. The Portfolio and evidence from staff seem to suggest that some students may undertake units out of personal interest rather than with an intention to complete a course, though it is difficult to confirm whether or not this is the case.

The College needs to undertake further analysis to detect whether the apparent high attrition rates are an artefact of students switching between part-time and full-time study or between courses, or whether they point to a significant non-completion rate.

The Panel also received conflicting answers on the question of whether there is a limit on the length of time that can be taken to complete Tabor Victoria awards. Some staff seemed to think there is a limit, even if it is not being applied, while others, including administrative staff with responsibility for the application of relevant policies, indicated that there is no limit. The Panel concluded that there effectively are no time limits on the completion of Tabor Victoria awards and advises the College to consider instituting a maximum length of time students can

be enrolled in each of its awards, perhaps after benchmarking with other higher education institutions.

2.2 Partnerships

VCCE

The VCCE assisted Tabor Victoria to develop a youth work major in its Bachelor of Arts through having a VCCE staff member based at the College. With the departure of the person concerned Tabor Victoria is in the process of investigating future collaboration with VCCE.

TEAR Australia

TEAR Australia funded a staff member to be based at Tabor Victoria, as part of the Micah 6:8 Centre, to help the College develop four units that form Tabor Victoria's recently approved Aid and Development stream in its masters degree. The Director of the Micah 6:8 Centre will also have an active role in the delivery of this stream, which will be taught with the assistance of aid organisations. It is hoped that the Micah 6:8 Centre will also develop as a research centre.

CityLife and UNOH

A total of six Tabor Victoria units are available through the Knox CityLife Church, with two units available per semester. Units are given by CityLife lecturers or sometimes by Tabor Victoria lecturers, though the Panel found it hard to distinguish between the two as the current Acting Head of Theology at Tabor Victoria also works for CityLife and teaches units there. According to Tabor Victoria and CityLife, the unit guides and assessment are the same for students studying at CityLife as for students taking classes at Tabor Victoria's Ringwood North Campus. There are about 75 VET students and five higher education students studying at CityLife and they sit together in the same classes. The offering of higher education units at CityLife is a recent innovation. UNOH only offers VET programs and does not have any intention in the near future to offer higher education units. VET students do not generally appear to be articulating from CityLife and UNOH courses into Tabor Victoria higher education programs.

EQUIP Training

There are at any one time only a small number of Tabor Victoria students undertaking linguistic units at EQUIP Training – typically between one and four. EQUIP Training currently offers a Diploma of Language Description and Development and a Graduate Diploma of Language Description and Development, accredited through the VRQA. It was indicated to the Panel that the Tabor Victoria students take units that were originally EQUIP Training units which have been modified to become units in the Tabor Victoria Bachelor of Arts. The EQUIP Training units are provided concurrently to Tabor Victoria Bachelor of Arts students, and EQUIP Training diploma and graduate diploma students, with separate assessment tasks. Generally Tabor Victoria students take their EQUIP Training classes offsite.

Eastern University (USA)

The other partnership related to Tabor Victoria course development is with Eastern University, an accredited Christian university that offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the arts, theology, nursing, education, counselling and business. Tabor Victoria has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Eastern University and is looking to develop further links with the university. This relationship is informing Tabor Victoria course development. The units

that form the Aid and Development stream of the masters course drew on Eastern University units.

Risk Management

While the numbers of higher education students involved with many of Tabor Victoria's teaching partnerships are small, nevertheless these partnerships are seen as part of the College's growth strategy. Partnerships are also becoming important to Tabor Victoria course development. These partnerships do not feature on the College's Risk Register yet they clearly do involve academic or other risks. For example, the multi-streaming that occurs with VET and higher education students at CityLife, and diploma, bachelor and graduate diploma students at EQUIP Training, poses risks in terms of ensuring that students achieve learning outcomes appropriate to the AQF level of the award they are studying. Where there is joint course development or outright purchase of units there needs to be a clear awareness on the part of Tabor Victoria staff of issues around intellectual property. Potential risks around course delivery, ownership of intellectual property, or the demise of the partner are not at present adequately documented.

Furthermore, the area of academic risk is not addressed in the Risk Register and College staff interviewed were uncertain as to the meaning of academic risk. The current Tabor Victoria Risk Register is not clear on the actions that should be taken to prevent or act on risks but instead lists relevant documents.

Recommendation 3

(urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria incorporate educational partnerships and academic risk into its risk management framework, and that the Risk Register include specified actions to prevent or act on risks.

2.3 Teaching and Learning

2.3.1 Teaching Arrangements

Tabor Victoria currently delivers a number of units via multi-streaming, that is the practice of students taking essentially the same units for awards at different levels. Usually this occurs through VET and undergraduate students, or undergraduate and postgraduate students, receiving the same unit concurrently. However, there is even 'triple streaming', with VET, undergraduate and postgraduate students in the same class. Tabor Victoria indicated that triple streaming relates to modular units that were approved by the relevant government accreditation authority some years ago through Tabor Adelaide and which are unlike the competency-based units now used in the VET sector. This practice is to be discontinued at the end of 2010 and there are less than ten students remaining who need to complete modular-based VET awards.

The Panel was assured by senior staff that where multi-streaming occurs, students studying different AQF level awards are given different unit outlines with different assessment tasks and that undergraduate and postgraduate students are generally separated for tutorials, with VET students not participating in tutorials. There is no formal policy that requires separate tutorials for undergraduate and postgraduate students and this is left up to individual lecturers. It was indicated to the Panel that under such arrangements in practice lecturers do not necessarily separate undergraduate and postgraduate students for tutorials, and some

lecturers expect their VET students to participate in tutorials with higher education students. The Panel was later told that in practice this 'tutorial time' has largely been absorbed into general class time.

The lack of clarity around teaching strategies and course content appropriate to AQF levels was apparent in the Year in the Sun program (YITS). YITS is an innovative program for school leavers designed to prepare them for a post-school future but also award them a qualification. Since 1997, YITS participants who met the requirements were awarded a VET award at the end of the program. In 2010 the option was opened up to YITS participants to undertake six higher education units credited toward a Tabor Victoria bachelor degree. The Panel received conflicting advice from College staff as to how this program works in practice. While some staff advised the Panel that the YITS cohort of VET and higher education students attend separate classes, the Panel also heard evidence that YITS higher education students undertake modified bachelor units and sit in the same classes as VET students.

Tabor Victoria indicated to the Panel that its multi-streaming arrangements have been approved by the VRQA. However, with no consistent practice from teaching staff with regard to multi-streaming and no clear policy on the practice, it is difficult to see how one can be assured that students studying at different AQF levels will achieve the appropriate outcomes for their award, particularly if they are being taught essentially the same unit and in the same classes.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop regulations regarding the multi-streaming of courses so as to clarify, for staff and students, the different characteristics and objectives of VET, undergraduate and postgraduate courses and ensure that when multi-streaming occurs teaching methods, student experience and assessment methods are appropriately differentiated for students studying at different AQF level awards.

This could be achieved, for example, through separate tutorials, appropriate assessment tasks and course delivery strategies devised by appropriately qualified staff.

At least one government accreditation authority jurisdiction does not presently permit multi-streaming of courses. As the pedagogical soundness of multi-streaming is open to question and its practice at Tabor Victoria is problematic for reasons outlined above, consideration should be given to phasing out multi-streaming. The Panel expects that the realisation of Tabor Victoria's growth ambitions would reduce the need to teach students concurrently at different AQF levels as a means of saving on costs.

Documentary evidence submitted to the Panel indicated that, while on the whole teaching staff appeared to be appropriately qualified, there are instances in which lecturers are teaching units where they do not hold a cognate qualification one AQF level above the level of award they are teaching, and in at least one instance a staff member was indicated as delivering higher education units where they held a qualification one AQF level below the level they are teaching. These may be isolated instances; however, Tabor Victoria needs to ensure that students are instructed by staff with qualifications appropriate to the AQF level of the course being delivered.

2.3.2 Modes of Delivery

Tabor Victoria has a flexible approach to the delivery of its courses. Units may be taken by students face-to-face at midweek classes, online or through weekend intensives, depending on the availability of units. The College is also flexible in its approach to students moving between full and part-time study. Students can mix and match the modes in which they take units, which enable them to better fit their studies in with other demands, such as work. Staff and graduates indicated that teacher practicum placements are flexible and provide students with considerable practical experience. Students and graduates highlighted Tabor Victoria's flexible approach to course delivery as one of the best features of studying at the College.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its flexible approach to course provision, which enables students to pursue their studies in a manner suited to their needs.

2.4 *Monitoring and Improvement*

2.4.1 Moderation of Assessment

The Portfolio indicates that Tabor Victoria has deliberately chosen not to engage in a cyclical external moderation process that involves sending papers to external markers to remark and potentially regrade assignments. Tabor Victoria may send unmarked papers to external markers for comment to inform its own marking practices. Evidence from interviews indicated that in practice what occurs is 'grade monitoring' with internal moderation where members of the ASC notice differences in grades between lecturers. When it is deemed necessary a selection of papers may be sent to an external marker for 'second marking'. Nevertheless, Tabor Victoria policy provides for internal and external moderation of assessment to occur at the end of each semester based on a sample of unmarked papers from each of the schools of study or subject areas, with external markers required to grade the assignments and write a brief report.

It was not clear to the Panel that Tabor Victoria policy is consistently or systematically applied with regard to the external moderation of assessment, including of student grades. There appeared to be a heavy reliance on ASC members noticing that grades in a certain subject look a little high. This matter is dealt with in Recommendation 5.

2.4.2 Improvements to Teaching and Learning

Mid-semester surveys have been used for some time by Tabor Victoria to enable lecturers to adjust teaching in response to student feedback, or to enable course or unit coordinators to take action regarding poorly performing lecturers. End of semester surveys are also used to improve course delivery. However, many of the processes given by staff as examples of how teaching and learning is improved are informal. Furthermore, teaching and learning is not a standing item on the regular faculty meetings held by academic staff, nor is it a standing item for the Academic Board. There is no teaching and learning plan and, as noted above, moderation is not used in a systematic way for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The lack of formal monitoring inhibits the development of a consistent approach to improving teaching and learning and consequently is a matter of concern.

A more formal approach to improving teaching standards is needed through the development of a teaching and learning plan to address matters such as: indicators of teaching quality, routine external moderation of assessment, allocation of teaching resources, and qualifications of teaching staff. Appendix E of the AUQA Audit Manual could provide a guide to Tabor Victoria in developing a teaching and learning plan.

Recommendation 5

(urgent) AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a systematic approach to the improvement of teaching and learning through the development of a teaching and learning plan that addresses, among other things: indicators of teaching quality; regular external moderation of assessment; allocation of resources for teaching; and, qualifications of teaching staff.

2.4.3 Plagiarism

Tabor Victoria's procedure in relation to plagiarism has been adapted from policies developed by the universities of Melbourne, Le Moyne in the USA and Alberta in Canada. In practice the College distinguishes between minor and major instances of plagiarism, with students counselled in the first instance. A second major infringement will result in a student being expelled from the course and being barred from enrolment for five years.

Students and graduates indicated to the Panel that the Tabor Victoria plagiarism policy was clearly articulated to them at the beginning of their courses and that the policy was strongly reinforced by lecturers.

Plagiarism offences are recorded using eMinerva so that repeat offences can be tracked and dealt with in accordance with the College's policy. Tabor Victoria is considering trialling Turnitin software in Semester 2 of 2010, though online submission of assignments already assists the College in detecting plagiarism.

The Panel found that Tabor Victoria takes the matter of plagiarism seriously and is active in trying to prevent occurrences.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for strong approach to plagiarism, both in terms of prevention, through educating students, and in addressing instances of plagiarism, through effective tracking via eMinerva and a clearly articulated policy for dealing with instances of plagiarism.

2.5 *Research and Scholarship*

Tabor Victoria sees itself as primarily a teaching-only institution focused on producing practitioners in the fields of education, youth work, counselling, ministry and the arts. Nevertheless, the College does recognise the importance of research and scholarship and is committed to developing a culture of scholarship with a view to developing high-level practitioners.

The Performance Portfolio indicates that support given to staff in relation to research and scholarship includes staging staff research seminars and supporting staff to attend conferences

or to publish. Tabor Victoria indicated that since teaching occurs from Tuesday to Thursday this increases the time available to pursue scholarly activities, however, non-teaching days are also used for academic staff meetings, professional development and other activities, and may not be applicable to part-time staff.

Tabor Victoria provided evidence of research and scholarship activity on the part of some staff. Nonetheless, evidence from staff indicated that opportunities for research and scholarship are limited. The College does not have a policy that allocates time for research and scholarship, either through non-teaching semesters or specifically designated non-teaching days. The Portfolio affirms the need to improve research and scholarship at Tabor Victoria by directly allocating time to staff for research, rewarding research excellence, including scholarly outcomes in performance appraisals, and encouraging staff to supervise higher degree research students where relevant.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms Tabor Victoria's objective to improve opportunities for academic staff to engage in research, and to foster a culture of scholarship.

2.6 Culture of Critical Inquiry

Staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders confirmed that Tabor Victoria places a high value on, and gives strong encouragement to, critical thinking and open intellectual inquiry. The Tabor Victoria Statement on Academic Freedom encourages open intellectual inquiry and respect for the views and values of others and of Tabor Victoria. The multi-denominational nature of the College provides an environment where critical inquiry and tolerance of others' views is encouraged. Staff confirmed that they have freedom to research broadly, as outlined in the Statement. An example of freedom of thought given by staff was a scientific lecture given on genetics to balance the biblical perspective. Another example given was a recent trip taken by YITS students to a mosque. Advice from students and graduates to the Panel indicates that students are free to debate issues from any perspective and are exposed by academic staff to a wide range of views. Students and graduates indicated that Tabor Victoria courses help to develop their capacities for critical thought and reflection. In the case of graduates the critical skills gained are now being applied in non-theological areas that are not necessarily related to the courses graduates studied. Current students and graduates attested to the rigour of Tabor Victoria courses, with some commenting that they were more rigorous than the university courses they had undertaken prior to transferring to or enrolling in Tabor Victoria courses.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its culture of open intellectual inquiry which is helping to develop its students' capacities for critical thought and reflection, and their tolerance and respect for alternate views.

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

The small complement of permanent academic staff means that Tabor Victoria staff have dual roles. For example, the senior management team also have teaching roles, including the Principal and the Academic Registrar, while some administrative staff also teach. Tabor Victoria relies on sessional staff to do a significant amount of teaching.

3.1 *Organisational Structures and Decision Making*

The recent appointment of an Executive Director of Operations with responsibility for operational matters has enabled the Principal, the Dean and the Academic Registrar to concentrate on their areas of prime responsibility. The Principal's role is essentially strategic and includes prime responsibility for developing partnerships and diversifying income streams. The Dean manages academic staff and programs, while the Academic Registrar is responsible for academic systems and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. Tabor Victoria documentation indicates there are heads of schools for theology and context, counselling and human services, education, and arts and culture.

Staff indicated that while there were some issues with Tabor Victoria's direction six months ago, they are positive with the way the College is currently being managed. Evidence from staff indicated that internal communication, identified in recent staff surveys as an issue in need of attention, is more focused now with regular updates. The appointment of an Executive Director of Operations has helped to improve communication.

3.2 *Academic and Administrative Staff*

3.2.1 Staff Development

Evidence provided to the Panel in the form of staff surveys highlighted professional development as an area where the College needs to improve. Professional development at Tabor Victoria is dealt with via the rather brief Promotion and Career Development Policy and through the Study Leave Policy. The Portfolio indicates that Tabor Victoria holds biannual professional development days and supports attendance of academic staff at one academic conference per year. Sessional staff are invited to the staff retreat, while staff teaching in counselling must report to Tabor Victoria as to whether they are meeting Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia requirements for professional development.

The Portfolio acknowledges that more work needs to be done to encourage staff to use their professional development entitlement, and senior management and other staff when interviewed affirmed this claim. Evidence from staff also indicated that professional development needs to be more targeted towards staff roles and should not be conflated with work-place training.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms the intention of Tabor Victoria to improve its provision of professional development to staff by aligning it with their professional responsibilities.

3.2.2 Staff Workload

Staff surveys indicate the management of staff workloads as an issue, and the Tabor Victoria Portfolio states that the management of workloads is currently centred on academic staff. Tabor Victoria is looking to use the UGBOOT to calculate workloads for academic staff.

Tabor Victoria does not have a workload policy and there is recognition by some staff that managing workloads can be an issue. As the College looks to increase student numbers and expand its range of course offerings, it will need to have a clear policy on staff workload, both academic and administrative, in order to manage staff workloads in a systematic way, especially given the dual roles many Tabor Victoria staff members undertake.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria ensure manageable workloads for all staff by developing a staff workload policy that takes account of the multi-faceted roles that are undertaken by many staff members.

3.2.3 Staff Appraisal

The Tabor Victoria policy on appraisal is brief at four short paragraphs. The policy indicates that performance appraisal is focused on an annual assessment against the position description, with consideration of student evaluations in the case of academic staff. Interviews with some staff also indicated that performance appraisals could be somewhat perfunctory, though other staff were more positive. Evidence from interviews indicates that sessional teaching staff, whom Tabor Victoria refer to as contracted visiting lecturers, do not undergo any formal performance appraisal, though feedback from student surveys is communicated to them. Student feedback and verbal discussions with Unit Coordinators forms the basis of staff appraisal for Tabor Victoria's contracted visiting lecturers.

The Portfolio acknowledges that staff appraisal focuses on individual position descriptions and therefore concentrates on task completion rather than task effectiveness. The Portfolio affirms the need to include research and scholarly outcomes in position descriptions and annual performance appraisals for academic staff. Staff interviewed indicated that Tabor Victoria is now trying to link staff appraisal more clearly with professional development. .

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms the intention of Tabor Victoria to improve staff appraisal through: better linkage to staff professional development; the inclusion, in the case of academic staff, of research and scholarly outcomes; and, refocusing on task effectiveness.

The Panel advises Tabor Victoria that in moving to improve staff appraisal processes the College should consider developing and implementing an appraisal policy that links position

descriptions to strategic objectives and assesses effectiveness in teaching and learning for all teaching staff.

3.3 Support for Student Learning

Students and graduates interviewed commended Tabor Victoria for the level of pastoral and other support provided to students. Students are allocated a course advisor who provides advice, pastoral care and advocacy to the student for the duration of the course. Students new to higher education studies or who have not studied for some time must attend a brief course in study techniques. Students are offered Resource Centre (Library) tutorials and online tutorials on Tabor Victoria's learning management system, which integrates Moodle, the UGBOOT and eMinerva to enable the electronic submission of assignments and the posting of unit guides onto the web. Students gave strong support to the online submission of assignments; graduates saw it as a great improvement on what was previously a fairly inflexible system of in-person submission of assignments.

The Tabor Victoria Board, senior management and staff were student focused in their interviews with the Panel and underscored the importance that Tabor Victoria places on providing a supportive and nurturing environment to students. Some students and graduates told the Panel that they had transferred to Tabor Victoria from the university they were attending in order to benefit from the College's more personal, nurturing environment.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its student-centred approach to higher education and for its institutional culture of student support.

3.4 Information Resources

According to the Portfolio the Tabor Victoria Library, referred to as the Resource Centre, contains over 60,000 books, videos and cassettes, along with 30,000 journal articles, and access to databases. There is an online catalogue. The Library is housed in a large building which the Panel toured. Staff, graduates and students are satisfied with information resources available through the Resource Centre. The College has two full-time librarians on staff. Staff indicated that Tabor Victoria has done a good job of developing library resources from where they were a few years ago and that the Library's move to larger premises had been of great benefit. Senior management has budgeted for increased information technology resources in the Resource Centre and plan to develop meeting rooms should Tabor Victoria remain at its current location. The College provides wireless access throughout the campus, which is appreciated by the students.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Tabor Victoria's activities in relation to teaching and learning and moderation are described in section 2 of this Report. This section provides comment on the overarching quality systems without further repetition of the earlier specific material.

4.1 *Review and Evaluation*

While documentation submitted by Tabor Victoria indicated the existence of course committees in ministry, theology, mission studies, counselling, education and the arts, it was not clear to the Panel how active many of these course committees are at present. The Panel interviewed external members of the education and theology course committees. These committees are composed of external academics, practitioners and staff who teach the courses concerned.

Previously, Tabor Victoria course committees met together with the Academic Board, which gave them the opportunity to be involved in the review and evaluation of Tabor Victoria course curricula. However, now that the practice of joint meetings with the Academic Board has ceased, the functions of the course committees is unclear and they presently are only being used on an ad hoc basis to review new course proposals. The theology course committee has not met for over a year and Tabor Victoria was unable to provide any minutes of meetings for this course. The education course committee last met in November 2009 to consider a new course. No other course committee appears to have met for some time. Committee members interviewed expressed some uncertainty as to the current status of course committees but nevertheless felt that their committees had a future role at Tabor Victoria in terms of assuring the quality of course curricula.

External stakeholders interviewed by the Panel indicated that, while they had provided informal feedback to Tabor Victoria on their course curricula and delivery, there has been no attempt by the College to seek formal feedback. External stakeholders were keen to provide feedback to Tabor Victoria on course development.

The Panel concluded that course review and evaluation processes at Tabor Victoria were in a state of flux at the time of the audit, with no formal process having been established for reviewing and evaluating course curricula via input from academic experts, practitioners and external stakeholders. Tabor Victoria needs to develop an approach to continuous improvement of course curricula. This could be achieved by reviving the role of its course committees in course review and evaluation and by seeking formal feedback from external stakeholders. It is important that the approach to course review and evaluation be focused on ongoing improvement and not simply be reactive to accreditation cycles.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a process of regular, formal course review and evaluation that includes input from its course committees and external stakeholders.

4.2 Benchmarking and Data

Tabor Victoria has not instituted a formal approach to benchmarking nor has it developed any sets of indicators to use for the purposes of benchmarking. The Portfolio demonstrated some reluctance to engage in the process of benchmarking based on a view that Tabor Victoria is unique in its combination of course offerings, ranging from theology and ministry to counselling and education. During the Audit Visit, although there was still a tendency for the perceived uniqueness of the College to be seen as an impediment to benchmarking, there was nevertheless recognition of the benefits of benchmarking from Tabor Victoria Board members, senior management and staff. Some informal benchmarking is taking place with regard to Tabor Victoria courses and in the area of its Library resources.

Tabor Victoria's capacity to benchmark is of course affected by the quality of its data collection and analysis. The College acknowledges that it is in a developmental phase with regard to the collection and analysis of data, including course survey data from students and graduates. Graduates receive a brief exit survey prepared by Tabor Victoria but they are not surveyed after they have left the College. Tabor Victoria has given consideration to using Graduate Careers Australia to survey graduates but the cost is prohibitive for a small college. However, the College hopes to pursue this option in the near future through the assistance of the Council of Private Higher Education. Tabor Victoria is hoping a new staff member appointed to the ASC, who is trained in psychological statistics, will assist in data analysis. Tabor Victoria has moved to online surveying of students, though there are issues here with achieving reasonable response rates.

It was clear to the Panel that Tabor Victoria needs not only to improve its collection of data but also to ensure that it is analysed in a manner that is aimed at improving institutional performance, for example in the area of attrition rates (section 2.1.2). Institutional performance could also be improved through formal benchmarking with external comparators, with benchmarking linked to continuous improvement in areas such as institutional performance, course delivery or course development.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a more rigorous, formal approach to the collection and analysis of data and to external benchmarking, with a focus on continuous improvement.

4.3 The Quality Management System

Tabor Victoria is in the process of building an online quality management system centred on the UGBOOT, an in-house software system developed to store, and maintain quality control over, accredited units. The UGBOOT stores unit guides, assessment requirements and learning outcomes. The College gave a demonstration of the UGBOOT to the Panel during the Audit Visit.

The UGBOOT assigns various levels of permissions to users depending on their role at Tabor Victoria. For example, it prevents sessional staff from making changes to unit guidelines or assessment tasks. Quality control is exercised through a quality assessor and through a system of alerts. The UGBOOT enables the College to set and monitor criteria for assessment tasks that are appropriate to the level of award being taught. If a change is made to an assessment task for a unit and the revised assessment task does not meet the Tabor Victoria's requirements for that level of award a control warning will be sent to the quality assessor. The

UGBOOT also has the capacity to generate alerts where academic staff are assigned responsibility for a unit for which they are not sufficiently qualified to teach. This should therefore enable Tabor Victoria to use the Tool to ensure that unit guidelines are appropriately differentiated for undergraduate and postgraduate students in courses where multi-streaming currently takes place.

Unit guidelines and assessment requirements are exported from the UGBOOT to Moodle where they are accessed by students. Students download unit guidelines from, and upload assignments to, Moodle, which also manages requests for extensions to the due dates of assignments. A student diary on eMinerva records student details, including plagiarism offences.

The UGBOOT has improved the capacity of Tabor Victoria to ensure that course content, assessment tasks, learning outcomes and teaching staff are aligned and are appropriate to the AQF level of the award being taught. Awareness of the functions and benefits of the UGBOOT, Moodle and eMinerva is high among staff of Tabor Victoria and its partners. It was clear to the Panel that the development of the UGBOOT and its integration with Moodle and eMinerva has not only provided efficiency benefits to staff and students but also provides an excellent platform from which to monitor and improve course content and delivery. The integration of the UGBOOT, Moodle and eMinerva also enables Tabor Victoria to monitor more closely student performance and to provide better service to students.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends Tabor Victoria for its in-house development of the Unit Guide Basic Online Outline Tool (UGBOOT) and the integration of the Tool with eMinerva and Moodle, which will provide an online platform for the College to closely monitor and continuously improve course content and delivery.

Nevertheless, what is lacking at Tabor Victoria is cohesive direction in the area of quality assurance. The Tabor Victoria policy on Quality Processes and Monitoring assigns to the Dean and the Academic Registrar responsibility to 'utilise' and 'take note' of a set of seven 'quality indicators', around student performance and satisfaction, relevance and comparability of course curriculum, graduate destinations, links with professional bodies and the adequacy of physical facilities. However, Tabor Victoria was unable to clearly explain to the Panel how these indicators are used for improvement and who acts on each of them. In general, there was a lack of clarity from staff as to who leads quality assurance at the College, though there was recognition that ultimately all staff are responsible. The Academic Dean indicated that in practice quality assurance is their responsibility.

Tabor Victoria needs to bring together various aspects of quality assurance at the college, such as the integrated online platform built around the UGBOOT, Moodle and eMinerva, into a comprehensive quality management system. Developing a more integrated and systematic quality management system also means clearly delineating the quality assurance roles of relevant staff and Tabor Victoria bodies such as the Academic Board and the Academic Standards Committee, and reducing overlapping responsibilities. Quality assurance at the College also needs to have a closer focus on continuous improvement. This could be achieved by incorporating key performance indicators into the quality management system, thereby enabling Tabor Victoria to determine where improvements need to be made and to monitor these improvements.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that Tabor Victoria develop a more integrated and systematic quality management system that clearly delineates the quality assurance roles and responsibilities of relevant individuals and college bodies and which takes account of key performance indicators to determine and monitor improvements.

5 DATA

Item 5.1: Higher education courses and students (2009)

Course Name	EFTSL	Number
Bachelor of Theology/Associate in Theology Majors in: Theology, Mission Studies, Ministry and Biblical Studies	61	133
Bachelor of Arts	69	123
Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma in Arts	18	47
Graduate Diploma in Education	11	19
Master of Arts in Church Practice	19	36
	178	358

Source: Tabor College (Vic) Inc.

Item 5.2: Staffing (2009)

	Number	FTE	Number of Doctorates
Leadership	3	3	2
Faculty	12	8	5
Resource Centre Staff	2	2	
Administrative Staff	7	5.4	
TOTAL	24	18.4	

Source: Tabor College (Vic) Inc.

The data below is taken from the higher education statistics collections of DEEWR.

Item 5.3 Broad field of education (FOE) by level of course, 2008

Broad FOE	Course Level	EFTSL	Count
Education	Grad (Post) Dip – new area	9.2	12
Education Total		9.2	12
Non-award courses	Non-award courses	0.4	1
Non-award courses Total		0.4	1
Society and Culture	Bachelors Pass	141.5	323
	Grad (Post) Dip – extending area	19.3	61
	Masters by Coursework	13.7	37
Society and Culture Total		174.5	421
Tabor Victoria Total		184.2	434

Item 5.4 Broad field of education by type of attendance, 2008

Broad FOE	Attendance Type	EFTSL	Count
Education	Full-time	7.6	9
	Part-time	1.6	3
Education Total		9.2	12
Non-award courses	Part-time	0.4	1
Non-award courses Total		0.4	1
Society and Culture	Full-time	75.9	109
	Part-time	98.6	312
Society and Culture Total		174.5	421
Tabor Victoria Total		184.2	434

Item 5.5 Type of attendance by level of course, 2008

Attendance Type	Course Level	EFTSL	Count
Full-time	Bachelors Pass	68.8	95
	Grad (Post) Dip - extending area	7.1	14
	Grad (Post) Dip - new area	7.6	9
Full-time Total		83.6	118
Part-time	Bachelors Pass	72.7	228
	Grad (Post) Dip - extending area	12.6	47
	Grad (Post) Dip - new area	1.6	3
	Masters by Coursework	13.4	37
	Non-award courses	0.4	1
Part-time Total		100.6	316
Tabor Victoria Total		184.2	434

Item 5.6 EFTSL trend of attendance type and overseas/domestic indicator

Attendance Type	2005	2006	2007	2008
Full-time	59.3	62.7	53.9	83.6
Part-time	39.6	51.3	88.5	100.6
Domestic	98.8	114.1	140.0	181.6
Overseas	0	0	2.4	2.5
Total EFTSL	98.8	114.1	142.4	184.2

Item 5.7 Student outcomes**Attrition Rates**

	2005	2006	2007
Society and Culture	34.65	35.65	41.09

Progress Rates

	2006	2007	2008
Society and Culture	88.0	87.33	89.21

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TABOR COLLEGE (VIC) INC.

History and Academic Profile

Tabor Victoria was first established in 1988 as a campus of Tabor Australia, which commenced in Adelaide in 1979. For over 10 years, the College's National Office in Adelaide was responsible for the accreditation and registration process for all the College's courses and campuses. Tabor Victoria became independent of Tabor Australia in 2005.

The College is a dual sector tertiary institution, being both a HEP (since 2005) and a registered training organisation (RTO) (since 2009, having previously worked through the Tabor College Adelaide RTO). In 2009 there were 178 FTE higher education students and 58 FTE VET students enrolled at Tabor Victoria.

Tabor Victoria is part of the emerging sector identified as 'Christian Tertiary Institutions'. An independent HEP, Tabor Victoria is not part of any consortia that have traditionally dominated the bible and theological college sector. It is differentiated from most other Christian colleges, and certainly those in Victoria, by virtue of its range of offerings which includes a general Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary).

Mission and Values

As a tertiary education provider committed to Christian values, Tabor Victoria's mission is to equip and empower people, through enquiry, to live their vocation, and engage church, society and marketplace. The tagline which has been in use for some years further exemplifies this: 'Empowering God's People *to Transform the world*'. The current tagline is 'Think. Life'.

Tabor Victoria's educational ethos is shaped by the transforming power of the gospel.

- We enquire through a sustained pursuit of knowledge, a commitment to practical application of knowledge. In humility we seek to be sober-minded and even-handed in our judgments.
- Together we engage with the gospel as a community of faith, respect, support, prayer and exploration.
- And as we are empowered by God, we seek to empower those who are part of Tabor Victoria to be deep-thinking believers who live significant lives in the church, society and the marketplace.

As a Christian College, we value:

- C – **Connectedness** with Community and Church
- L – **Lifelong learning** as an act of worship and prayer
- A – **Academic excellence** and **Applied Knowledge**
- Y – **Yieldedness to Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

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

Mission

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

Objectives

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

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

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

Vision

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

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

Values

AUQA will be:

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

AUQA's Mission and Objectives were revised in March 2007, as recommended by MCEETYA.

AUQA's Vision and Values have been modified accordingly.

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Dr Jasen Burgess, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

Dr Vivienne Watts, Vice-President (Administration and Research), Avondale College, (Chair)

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASC.....	Academic Standards Committee
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CityLife	CityLife Church
College, the.....	Tabor College (Vic) Inc.
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL.....	equivalent full-time student load
eMinerva	online database used for managing student information
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
EQUIP Training.....	trading name of Summer Institute of Linguistics Australia
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 effective
HEP(s)	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now disbanded)
Moodle	online learning management system
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
National Guidelines	<i>National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>
QAFs	Quality Audit Factors
RTO	registered training organisation
Tabor Victoria	Tabor College (Vic) Inc.
TEAR Australia	Transformation, Empowerment, Advocacy, Relief - Australia
UGBOOT	Unit Guide Basic Online Outline Tool
UNOH.....	Urban Neighbours of Hope
VCCE	Victorian Council of Christian Education
VET.....	vocational education and training
VRQA	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
YITS	Year in the Son program

