

The University of Sydney Academic Board

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (SER) FOR ACADEMIC BOARD REVIEW PHASE 3

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1 PURPOSE OF THE REVIEWS

The Academic Board reviews are intended to encourage, in our faculties, an academic culture that values scholarship, free inquiry and intellectual rigour and honesty, supporting, in turn, the development and maintenance of high standards of teaching, scholarship and research. The process of the reviews in Phase 3 is intended to encourage and assist faculties to reflect on the key elements and processes in their academic environments, and form views on the strength of their culture and ways in which it can, if needed, be improved.

2 GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

1.1 The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is the principal reference document considered by the Review Team and forms the basis of the review. It should be a self-critical, analytic and evidence-based document which identifies faculty strengths, but also addresses areas for improvement.

1.2 The context in which the Academic Board reviews are undertaken has changed since the process was initiated. Figure 1 shows some of the key relationships faculties have within and outside the University in the current climate. A significant proportion of the performance factors and historical snapshots which were the major focus of previous Academic Board reviews is now the responsibility of other portfolios within and outside the University. Also, the resolutions adopted by the Board in 2006 to initiate Phase Three of the reviews indicated that some changes would be made to the content of the reviews, particularly inclusion of a focus on the performance the faculty wished to achieve in the future and the first steps necessary to pursue this aspiration.

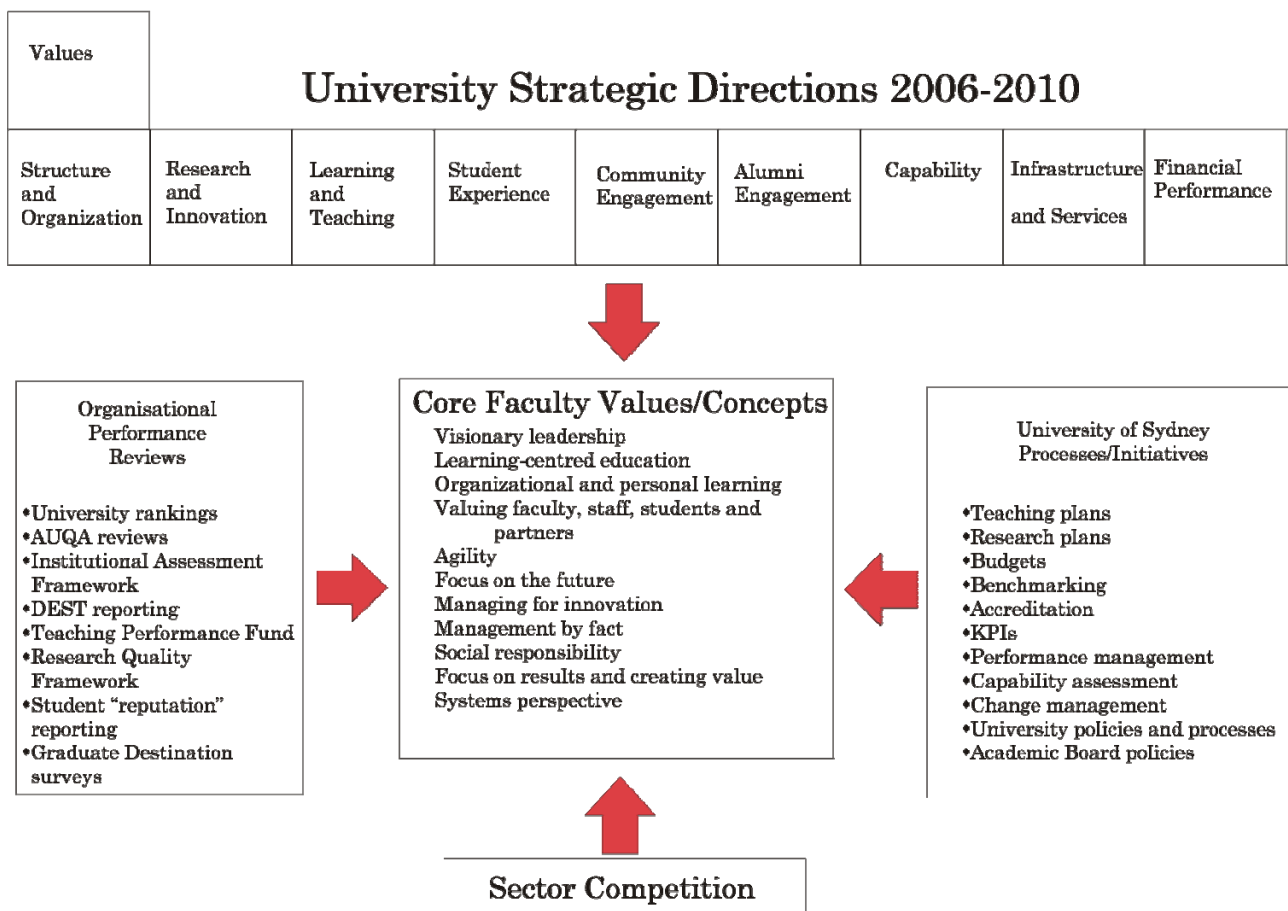


Figure 1.

- 1.3 The focus of the Phase Three reviews will be on the faculty culture which supports, and the processes that lead to, continuous quality improvement in academic activities. This focus is chosen to ensure both that the Academic Board reviews are complementary to the other performance management activities in which faculties are now engaged and that they support faculty activities pursuing academic quality.
- 1.4 There are many organizations around the world in corporate, health, not-for-profit and education sectors that have instituted quality assurance and quality improvement programs for very similar reasons. The format is similar to that of Academic Board reviews: self reflection manifest in a self-evaluation report which can then be reviewed by colleagues and acted upon. To guide the development of the self-evaluation report, a consistent grouping of criteria has been developed and widely adopted. The relationship of the criteria to each other and to the holistic performance of the organisation (in our case, the faculty) is shown in **Figure 2**. The criteria are built on a set of interrelated core values and concepts:
- Visionary leadership
 - Learning-centred education
 - Organizational and personal learning
 - Valuing faculty, staff, students and partners
 - Agility
 - Focus on the future
 - Managing for innovation
 - Management by fact
 - Social responsibility
 - Focus on results and creating value
 - Systems perspective

These values and concepts are embedded beliefs and behaviours found in high-performing organizations.

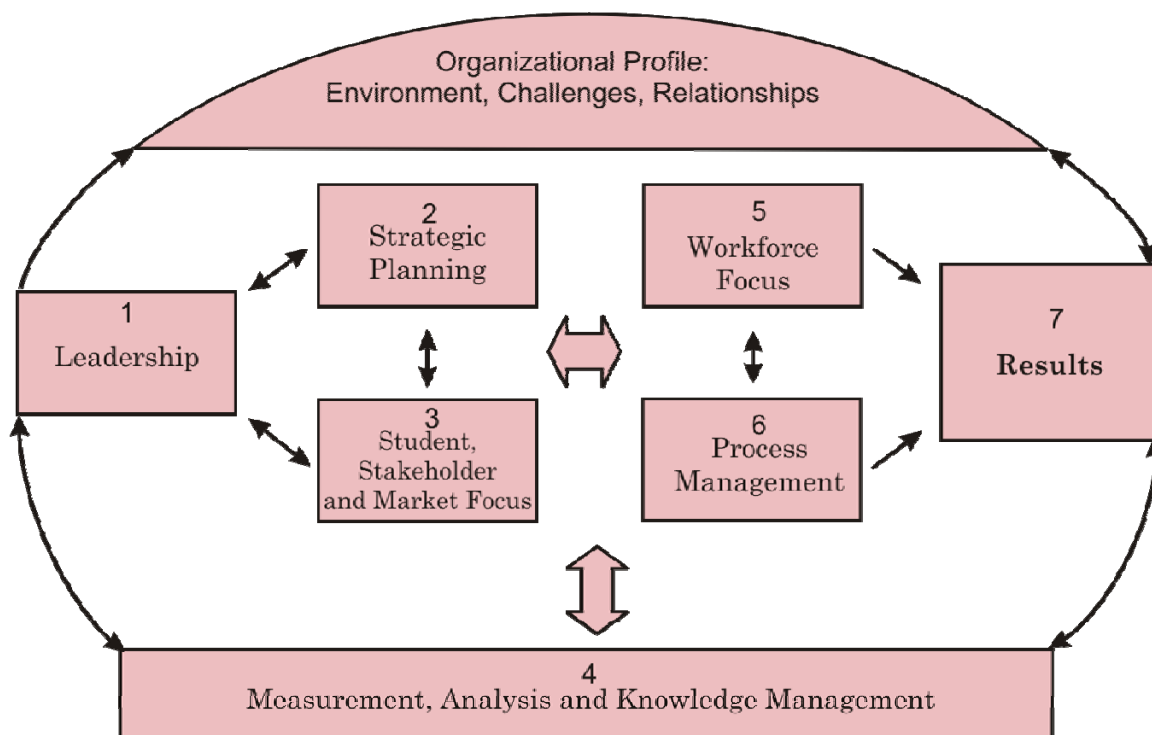


Figure 2 Criteria for performance excellence framework: a systems perspective

- 1.5 The guidelines detailed later in this guide have been adapted from the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence 2007. These criteria have been used in U.S higher education institutions either in original form or as AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program). The questions which inform the Baldrige criteria have been heavily edited to conform to the requirements of faculties in this university.

3 KEY SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES TO PHASE 1&2 ACADEMIC BOARD REVIEWS

Similarities

- Focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement
- Focus on all aspects of the faculties operations
- Faculty wide reviews
- Format of review visit
- Review reports will include commendations and recommendations
- Review reports will be placed on the quality website

Differences

- The focus on quality assurance is primarily directed to an assessment of process: how your faculty systematically integrates planning, action and review to achieve performance outcomes and stated objectives.
- The SER is the core of the review. The purpose is to clearly describe the activities and processes of the faculty to enable the:
 - faculty to draw their own conclusions on the quality of their processes as they support the faculty's strategic objectives
 - Review Team to assess the robustness and validity of the faculty's judgements.

4 WHAT WILL THE REVIEWERS LOOK FOR IN THE SER?

Sections 2-6 of the SER explore faculty Processes, while Section 7 explores Results.

Process refers to the methods your faculty *uses* and *improves* to address the requirements of items in Sections 2-6. A process is generally a series of linked actions that aim to achieve a specific outcome. As appropriate, this can be either a formal documented series of steps, or a less formal general understanding of the expected sequence of actions/events that will lead to competent performance (eg timing, contingencies, seeking feedback/input).

Four factors you can use to self-evaluate your faculty's processes are:

- approach: methods used for addressing the items in each section, including appropriateness, effectiveness, degree to which they are evidence-based and repeatability;
- deployment: the extent and consistency with which the approach is applied to address the items in each section;
- learning: how the approach is evaluated and refined, innovation sought and the outcomes shared;
- integration: the extent to which the approach is aligned with strategic objectives (university and faculty) and applied across the faculty; the extent to which complementarity and alignment between processes is achieved.

Results refer to *outputs* and *outcomes* in achieving the requirements in Section 7. Four factors you can use to self-evaluate your results are:

- current level of performance;
- rate and breadth of performance improvements;
- your performance relative to appropriate comparisons and benchmarks;
- linkage of results measures to key process targets.

5 REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETING THE SER

1.6 Data

To support faculty presentation of the SER, selected KPI data identified by the Office of Strategy Implementation and Sustainability Planning relevant to Research and Innovation and Learning and Teaching and the Student Experience will be provided to the faculties.

1.7 **Length**

The aim of the SER is to provide a high level overview of the faculty's assessment of its culture which supports, and the processes that lead to, continuous quality improvement in academic activities. The assessment should be sufficiently detailed for the review team to assess the validity of the faculty's conclusions, and should focus on key areas of importance for the faculty at the time of Review.

As a guide the Academic Board expects that this will be achieved if the faculty completes each section concisely, for instance, for the smaller faculties without Schools or Departments, in **4 pages** or less. Clear bullet points and supporting tables and figures should be used wherever possible.

1.8 **Format**

The standard SER format has eight sections, and it is expected that the faculty will cover the requirements for each section. However, due to the integrated nature of activities there may be some overlap in the faculty's response to different sections. For this reason, or to better reflect the faculty's activities, the faculty may wish to choose a different format.

1.9 **Supplementary material**

The Faculty may wish to attach (existing) documents that provide additional information supporting the SER, (for example, strategic plans, research management plans and teaching management plans).

1.10 **Presentation**

Faculties are asked to produce a single, collated and/or bound document containing all relevant material for the Review. This would include:

- the SER
- all relevant appendices and attachments
- list of contents
- section and page numbers throughout

As far as possible, Faculties are asked to supply documents in Microsoft Word format. Please provide **six** (hard) copies to the Review Team Secretary **four weeks** in advance of the Review meeting. An electronic copy should also be sent to the Review Team Secretary (but to supplement, not replace, the hard copies). Some faculties may wish to include a CD which has explicit hyperlinks between the report and appended documents.

Note that the guide is written on the assumption that the faculty is the organizational unit under review. In those cases where one or more schools are being reviewed, the term "school" can be understood in place of "faculty".

6 OVERVIEW OF THE SER STRUCTURE

Section I	Preface: Faculty profile
Section II	Leadership
Section III	Strategic Planning
Section IV	Student and stakeholder focus
Section V	Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management
Section VI	Workforce focus
Section VII	Academic Process Management
Section VIII	Results

SECTION I: PREFACE: FACULTY PROFILE

The faculty profile is a snapshot of the faculty, the key influences on how it operates and the key challenges faced. It describes the faculty's:

- operating environment, key relationships with students, stakeholders, service providers and partners.
- competitive academic environment, key strategic academic challenges and advantages.
- governance structures

SECTION II: LEADERSHIP

This section examines how the faculty leaders guide and sustain the faculty. It recognises that leadership is present at many levels in a faculty, with senior leaders generally bearing greater responsibility. All academic office bearers in the faculty, e.g., Associate Deans, Heads of Schools, degree coordinators, etc, are assumed to have a leadership role, supporting the Dean to take the faculty forward. How the faculty addresses its ethical and community responsibilities is also examined. It describes:

- how senior faculty leaders guide and sustain the faculty in its academic activities, including how senior leaders communicate within the faculty and encourage high academic performance.
- how the faculty addresses its responsibilities to the public and ensures ethical behaviour

SECTION III: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Within the context of the University's Strategic Directions 2006-2010, this section examines how the faculty develops and implements its strategic directions in relation to academic activities. It looks at how plans and strategic goals are developed, how they are implemented, how faculties adapt them to changing circumstances and how progress is measured. It states the faculty's key objectives and describes how the faculty:

- determines its strategic academic challenges and advantages and establishes its strategy and strategic objectives to address these challenges and enhance its advantages.
- turns its strategic plan into action.
- develops and deploys action plans for academic programs (teaching, learning, research, research training) throughout the faculty to achieve key objectives
- ensures that key outcomes of the action plans can be sustained
- sets performance/asures to meet these objectives, including performance projections for both short- and long-term planning horizons

SECTION IV: STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

This section looks at how the faculty establishes the needs, expectations and preferences of students and stakeholders. It examines how the faculty builds relationships with students and stakeholders, leading to student and stakeholder satisfaction, student retention and improved academic programs and services in teaching, research and research training. It describes how the faculty:

- determines the needs, expectations and preferences of students and stakeholders: to ensure the continuing relevance of academic programs and services; to develop opportunities for new academic programs and services; and create a climate conducive to research and learning for all students.
- builds relationships to attract, satisfy and retain students and stakeholders.
- determines student and stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

SECTION V: MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

This section examines the management and effectiveness of use of data and information to support key faculty processes. It recognizes that use of the data for performance management may occur in a different context and that key performance indicators are increasingly centrally provided. It discusses:

- the measures of academic performance the faculty uses or would wish to use.
- how the faculty uses, or would use, these data and information systematically to support faculty decision making and innovation and performance.
- how the faculty reviews its academic performance and capabilities and translates review findings into priorities for continuous or breakthrough improvement and opportunities for innovation that are communicated to the faculty.
- how the faculty manages organizational knowledge to ensure quality and availability of data, including transfer of knowledge, rapid dissemination of best practice and integration with strategic planning processes.

SECTION VI: WORKFORCE FOCUS

This section examines how the faculty, including all staff and researchers, are enabled to develop and utilize their full potential, aligned with the faculty's objectives, strategy and action plans. The faculty's efforts to build and maintain an environment conducive to academic performance excellence, full participation and personal and organizational growth are also examined. It discusses how the faculty:

- engages, compensates, and rewards staff to achieve high performance, including how staff, including leaders are developed to achieve high performance
- assesses workforce engagement and uses the results to achieve higher performance.
- manages workforce capability to accomplish the work of the faculty, including how the faculty maintains a safe, secure and supportive work climate.

SECTION VII: ACADEMIC PROCESS MANAGEMENT

This section examines key aspects of process management, including learning-focussed academic program design, program delivery, research training and services that support these activities. The section also examines how key processes are designed, effectively managed and improved to achieve higher academic performance and academic quality, to deliver value to students and stakeholders, to maximize student learning and success and to achieve organizational success and sustainability. It discusses how the faculty:

- Designs and delivers coursework programs, including how:
 - core competencies are determined and met
 - work systems and key processes are designed to deliver student and stakeholder value, maximise student learning and success, and achieve organisational success and sustainability
 - teaching programs are evaluated and improved
 - how key services to support learning and teaching are evaluated and improved
- Contributes to and supports knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and training of researchers, including the benefits of these programs and activities to key communities and to the faculty's strategic objectives, including how the faculty:
 - identifies its core research and research training competencies and how they relate to the faculty mission, competitive environment and strategic plans
 - encourages excellence at an international scale in research and provides cultural, intellectual and physical support to its research
 - achieves, sustains and improve the quality of research supervision
 - develops and uses indicators of high quality research performance

SECTION VIII: RESULTS

This section examines your faculty's performance and improvement in key academic areas, including the current levels and trends in key measures or indicators in each of the key areas listed below, and how the results compare with the performance of your competitors. Also, these results can be used to provide evidence for the effectiveness of processes described elsewhere in the SER.

- Student learning
- Research and research training
- Student and stakeholder focus
- Market performance
- Workforce focus
- Leadership