

## **Proposed Academic Board Resolution**

### **Annual review of academic activities**

The Academic Board is required by Senate Rule to participate in a formal and regular program of reviews of academic activities of faculties. This requirement is satisfied by Academic Board participation in:

- (a) any review commissioned by a senior officer of the university, at the invitation of that officer, and
- (b) Board-initiated reviews.

This Resolution of the Academic Board defines the purpose of Board-initiated reviews, and presents guidelines for such reviews.

### **Purpose**

The Academic Board advises the Senate and the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to and affecting the University's teaching and research activities and its educational programs, including general advice on the academic priorities and policies of the University. The Board's Standing Committees represent one important pathway for offering such advice, through ex officio membership of these committees by the Pro-Vice Chancellors with central portfolios. Another important pathway is through the Board's direct report to each meeting of Senate.

In order to fulfil these functions, the Academic Board co-ordinates and maintains an overview of the academic activities of faculties and similar organisational units. The Board's Annual Reviews of Academic Activities are designed to ensure that this overview is maintained consistently and constructively across the University, so that the Board is in a position to offer informed and accurate advice to Senate and the Vice-Chancellor.

The Academic Board's policy structures are intended to encourage the maintenance and development of high standards of teaching, scholarship and research. To be confident that the policy structures properly sustain academic quality assurance and are appropriate to the University's needs, the Board must monitor their implementation and effectiveness. Much of this monitoring is effected through the Annual Reviews of Academic Activities.

### **Policy**

1. Board-initiated reviews are internal, collegial visits designed to evaluate Academic quality assurance processes and to assist in the propagation of best Academic practice. In exceptional circumstances reviews may advise on the academic impact of resource allocation processes and performance indicators, but normally the review will be restricted to offering advice on academic activities.
2. Board-initiated reviews assist Faculties and Deans progress towards the goals identified in the University Plan and in Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans.
3. Board-initiated reviews are conducted annually, and comprise a series of three, ninety-minute, structured interviews with (a) students, (b) academic staff and, finally, (c) the Dean and senior academic officers of the faculty.

4. Interviews with students and staff will be designed to identify particularly praiseworthy or problematic aspects of the faculty's academic activities. Interviews with the Dean and senior academic officers will be designed to convey the outcomes of student and staff interviews, to evaluate progress towards the objectives and targets in the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Plan, and to report on good practice in the University.
5. Interview panels will comprise five people chosen as follows:
  - i. The Chair or a Deputy Chair of the Academic Board, who will normally Chair the Review.
  - ii. One member being a Chair of a Faculty or College Teaching and Learning Committee.
  - iii. One member being from a panel established by the Academic Board by invitation to all academic staff,
  - iv. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) or nominee
6. No person shall serve on the interview panel for Faculties of which they are members.
5. Interview panels will be provided with agendas pertaining to the topics selected for each annual review. The agendas have been constructed using techniques adopted by overseas university quality assurance agencies. The topics for consideration in each year will be selected according to the following Schedule:

Schedule of Academic Board Reviews of Faculty Academic Award Courses

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Aims and Outcomes	✓			✓
Curricula	✓			✓
Assessment	✓		✓	
Student Progression	✓		✓	
Teaching and Learning	✓	✓		
Learning Resources	✓	✓		
Quality assurance and improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓

6. Reviews will be undertaken on a 4-year cycle. The first year of a cycle is designed to evaluate the overall coherence and quality assurance of the award courses, and later years will concentrate on particular aspects of course delivery. In addition, each year's review will examine progress towards the objectives and targets specified in Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans.

## **Annual review of academic activities: Agenda for meetings with students**

### **Introduction**

1 Meetings with students enable reviewers to establish student views on the issues being considered. These meetings provide an opportunity not only to hear the direct views of those present, but also to establish more generally whether there are effective arrangements for student feedback and presentation.

2 The meeting is chaired by the Chair of the Review Panel, who will provide a brief summary of the review method. The chair will outline the purpose of the meeting and will emphasise the importance of openness in the review process. The dialogue with students will normally start with a question to establish the basis by which the students were selected by the faculty to attend the meeting, and then explore answers to the following questions.

#### *General matters*

How are your views sought by Departments and the Faculty?

Do you know whether students are represented on committees and if so, what is their role?

Are student's views influential? Can you provide some examples?

What arrangements are in place for collecting student feedback on teaching and units and for informing them of the actions taken in response to their feedback?

To what extent do you feel a part of a University learning community?

#### *The curriculum aims and intended learning outcomes*

Are you made aware of the intended learning outcomes by published course and unit aims and objectives or other means?

What do you think are the key aims of the program?

What do you think are the key outcomes expected of you in this program?

Does the curriculum encourage the development of knowledge and skills?

What is the relevance of the curriculum to further study and prospective employment?

Are timetables and workloads appropriate?

What opportunities are there for practical, vocational and professional experience?

To what extent do you benefit from the research expertise of your teachers? Can you give examples of how research has enhanced your experience and understanding?

#### *Assessment and achievement*

Do you understand the criteria for assessment and the methods employed?

Is assessment formative as well as summative?

Are assessments aimed at testing understanding of key ideas or the recall of knowledge?

What feedback on your work is provided? Is it prompt and effective?

In your view, have the intended learning outcomes been achieved?

Do academic staff discuss your achievement with you, individually or in groups?

What sorts of things are assessed? What do you think is the focus of the assessments?

Are your aspirations for further study and your career likely to be satisfied?

#### *Student progression and support*

What induction procedures are in operation?

What are the arrangements for academic support?

Are there suitable course-specific support materials?

Do support arrangements extend to work experience, placements, study abroad and similar activities?

Is the availability of computer workstations and software appropriate?

Are the teaching spaces and equipment adequate?  
What sorts of academic support have you required? What sorts of things helped you most? What sorts of things did not help you much?  
Are you aware of student support services outside the Faculty and, if so, have you used them?

*Teaching and learning*

Is the range of teaching and learning methods appropriate for delivering the curriculum?  
Is there effective support and guidance for independent study?  
Did the teaching and learning methods help you focus on trying to understand key ideas or was the focus more on covering material?  
Did the teaching help you engage enthusiastically with the subject matter – if so how?  
What aspects of teaching helped you engage, what aspects hindered your engagement?  
How did you experience the workload? Did you feel able to cope with it? What effects did the workload have on the way you have studied?

## **Annual review of academic activities: Agenda for meeting with staff**

This agenda outlines questions to assist academic reviewers elicit the views of staff regarding the Award Courses offered by the Faculty. The agenda will also provide a structure for subsequent discussions with the Dean. Items denoted by \* will be explored as part of each annual visit; the remaining questions address issues to be explored when required by the Schedule of topics.

The questions listed below are stated in a directive manner in order to indicate the focus of the meeting. The meeting itself will be collegial and discursive in practice, and the questions themselves may be adjusted to optimise the value of the interview.

### **1. *Aims and outcomes***

- Reviewers should evaluate the intended learning outcomes against relevant external reference points and against the aims described in the course documentation.

Reviewers should ask:

- \* What are the intended learning outcomes for a course?
- \* How clearly do you think the students understand the aims?  
How do the aims relate to external reference points including relevant subject benchmark statements, the Australian Qualifications Framework and any professional body requirements?  
How do the aims relate to the overall academic aims of the course as stated by the Faculty?  
What do the students understand the aims to be?

Reviewers should report whether the intended learning outcomes are clearly stated and whether they reflect appropriately relevant benchmark statements, other external references, and the overall aims of the course.

- Reviewers should evaluate the effectiveness of the way in which the Faculty plans, designs and approves the curriculum.

Reviewers should ask:

- \* How does the Faculty ensure that curriculum content enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?
- \* Does the Faculty involve students in the development of the curriculum, and do you think that the students understand the relationship between the curriculum and the course aims.  
How does the Faculty ensure that the design and organisation of the curriculum is effective in promoting student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes?  
Does the design and organization of the curriculum focus student attention on understanding key ideas and concepts?  
How are the generic skills developed within the curriculum?

Reviewers should report on the adequacy of procedures for ensuring that courses are designed to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

- Reviewers should evaluate the way in which the Faculty conveys its expectations to staff and students.

Reviewers should ask:

How are the intended outcomes of a course and its units of study communicated to staff and students?

What do you think the students think the intended learning outcomes are? Do students understand how the course enables them to achieve the intended outcomes? Do the students know what is expected of them?

Reviewers should report on the adequacy of arrangements within the course for communicating intended learning outcomes.

## **2. Curricula**

- Reviewers should evaluate the design and content of the curriculum for each course in relation to its potential for enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes

Reviewers should ask:

\* Do the design and content of the curricula encourage achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of:

knowledge and understanding,  
cognitive skills,  
subject specific skills (including practical/professional skills),  
transferable skills (including inquiry, research and communication skills),  
progression to employment and/or further study, and  
personal development?

\* Do you feel that students can articulate the way in which this encouragement occurs?

Reviewers should report on whether the intended learning outcomes are adequately supported by the curricula.

- Reviewers should evaluate whether the curriculum is adequately informed by recent developments in the theory and practice of university teaching and learning, by current research and scholarship, by the research expertise of staff, and by any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements

Reviewers should ask:

\* Is there evidence that curricular content and design is informed by:  
recent developments in the theory and practice of university teaching and learning,  
current research and scholarship in the discipline and its pedagogy,  
the research expertise of staff, and  
any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?

\* Are students reflective enough about the way they learn, and do they appreciate the tentative character of knowledge and understanding?

Reviewers should report on the adoption of recent developments in the curriculum.

## **3. Assessment**

- Reviewers should evaluate whether the overall assessment process and the particular assessment instruments chosen are appropriate and effective.

Reviewers should ask:

- \* Do your assessment practices enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended outcomes?
- \* What do you think are the students' perceptions of the assessment processes  
Are there criteria that enable examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement?  
Can there be full confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?  
Do students receive prompt and effective feedback on their progress?  
Do you think students understand that the assessments are testing understanding?

Reviewers should report on whether assessment processes can adequately measure achievement of the intended program outcomes.

- Reviewers should evaluate whether student achievement meets such expectations.

Reviewers should ask:

- What evidence is there that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for the award, as measured against relevant academic benchmarks and the Australian Qualifications Framework?  
Do you think that students are satisfied with the academic standards of the course?

Reviewers should report on the processes that determine whether appropriate standards are being achieved.

- Reviewers should evaluate the adequacy of quality assurance processes for academic standards used by the faculty.

Reviewers should ask:

- \* How does the Faculty review and seek to enhance academic standards in its courses and units of study?

Reviewers should report on the capacity of the Faculty to review and calibrate standards, and to promote enhancement.

#### **4. *Teaching and learning***

- Reviewers should evaluate the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning activities, in particular:  
the breadth, depth, pace and challenge of teaching;  
whether there is suitable variety of teaching methods;  
the effectiveness of the teaching of subject knowledge; and  
the effectiveness of the teaching of subject specific, generic and practical skills  
the effectiveness of integrating generic and disciplinary skills

Reviewers should ask:

- \* How effective is teaching in relation to curriculum content and course aims?
- \* How do you think students would respond to these questions?

How effectively do staff draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?

How good are the materials provided to support learning?

Is there effective engagement with and participation by students?

Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective staff development, peer review of teaching, integration of part-time and visiting staff, effective team teaching and induction and mentoring of new staff?

How effectively is learning facilitated in terms of student workloads?

Reviewers should be able to report on the extent to which teaching and learning contributes to the achievement of the intended outcomes.

## **5. *Student progression***

- Reviewers should evaluate whether the arrangements in place are effective in facilitating student progression towards successful completion of their courses.

Reviewers should ask:

\* Is there an appropriate overall strategy for academic support, including written guidance, which is consistent with the student profile and the overall aims of the course?

\* Are the arrangements for academic tutorial support clear and generally understood by staff and students?

Are there effective arrangements for admission and induction that are generally understood by staff and applicants?

How effectively is learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervisory arrangements?

Reviewers should report on the effectiveness of the induction arrangements, the strategy for student support and the progression of students.

Learning resources

- Reviewers should evaluate the effectiveness of the deployment of academic and support staff in support of the intended learning outcomes.

Reviewers should ask:

\* Is the collective expertise of the academic staff suitable and available for effective delivery of the curriculum, for the overall teaching, learning and assessment strategy, and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

\* Do you believe that students in this course would be positive about all aspects of the learning resources? If not, about what would they complain?

Are appropriate staff development opportunities available?

Is appropriate technical and administrative support available?

Reviewers should report on whether there are appropriately qualified staff who are contributing effectively to achievement of the intended outcomes.

- Reviewers should evaluate the appropriateness of the learning resources available, and the effectiveness of their deployment.

Reviewers should ask:

Is there an overall strategy for the deployment of learning resources?  
How effectively is learning facilitated in terms of the provision of resources?  
Is suitable teaching and learning accommodation available?  
Are the text-book and periodical stocks required for the course appropriate and accessible?  
Are suitable equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to learners?

Reviewers should report on how effectively the learning resources are deployed in support of the intended outcomes.

## **6. *Quality assurance and improvement***

- Reviewers should evaluate the extent to which quality assurance and improvement processes are understood and in operation

Reviewers should ask:

\* What quality assurance and improvement strategies are in operation at faculty and department level?  
How does the Faculty recognise and reward good teaching?  
What arrangements are in place for collecting student feedback on teaching and units of study, for acting on the results, and for informing students what action has been taken?  
What arrangements are in place for identifying and correcting problems in teaching and learning? Can you give examples?  
How well is the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Plan understood by staff and to what extent are they committed to it?  
Are the University's teaching and learning performance indicators understood and accepted by staff, and to what extent are they committed to improving them?  
Are staff aware of the central processes for allocating funds based on teaching performance and improvement, including scholarship of teaching?

Reviewers should report on how effectively the Faculty's quality assurance and improvement processes are embedded in normal academic activity and consistent with University requirements