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## Academic Board Agenda

Academic Board Officer: Miss E R Ring

Secretariat, Main Quadrangle, A14  
Phone: 9351 3305; Fax: 9351 3572  
E-mail: E.Ring@secretariat.usyd.edu.au  
Web site: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/>

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### Enclosure for the agenda

for the meeting of the Academic Board on 14 February 2001

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## Academic Board Resolutions

### The Management and Evaluation of Teaching

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## Part 1 – Preliminary

### 1. Commencement and Purpose

1. These Academic Board Resolutions commence on [1 January 2001].
2. The purpose of these Resolutions is to set out principles, policies and guidelines for managing and evaluating teaching activities within the University of Sydney.
3. These resolutions are made by the Academic Board pursuant to its Functions defined by the Senate Rules relating to the Academic Board, 1996 (as amended).

### 2. Dictionary

In this document:

**Academic unit** means a faculty, academic college, board of studies, school, department, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University.

**Award course** means a formally approved program of study which can lead to an academic award granted by the University.

**Coursework** means an award course not designated as a research award course. While the program of study in a coursework award course may include a component of original, supervised research, other forms of instruction and learning normally will be dominant. All undergraduate courses are coursework courses.

**Dean** means the dean of a faculty or the director or principal of an academic college, or chairperson of a board of studies.

**Department** means the academic unit responsible for teaching and assessing a unit of study. It may be a school, a centre or a unit within the University. It may also mean a faculty if the faculty does not have an internal departmental structure and it may similarly mean a board of studies or interdisciplinary committee.

**Faculty** means a faculty, college board or the Australian Graduate School of Management Limited, as established in each case by its constitution, or, where applicable, a board of studies. Faculties are responsible for award courses, and in this document the term refers to the faculty responsible for the award course concerned.

**Head of department** means the head of the academic unit responsible for teaching and assessing a unit of study. It may be the Head of a school, a centre or a unit within the University. It may also mean the Dean of a faculty if the faculty does not have an internal departmental structure and it may similarly mean the Chair of a board of studies or interdisciplinary committee.

**Postgraduate award course** means an award course leading to the award of a graduate certificate, graduate diploma, degree of master or a doctorate. Normally, a postgraduate award course requires the prior completion of a relevant undergraduate degree or diploma. A 'postgraduate' is a student enrolled in such a course.

**Research award course** means an award courses in which students undertake and report systematic, creative work in order to increase the stock of knowledge. The research award courses offered by the University are higher doctorates, Doctor of Philosophy, doctorates by research and advanced coursework, and certain degrees of master designated as research degrees. The systematic, creative component of a research course must comprise at least 66% of the overall course requirements.

**Undergraduate award course** means an award course leading to the award of a certificate, diploma, advanced diploma or degree of bachelor. An ‘undergraduate’ is a student enrolled in such a course.

**Unit of study or unit** means a stand-alone component of an award course. Each unit of study is the responsibility of a department.

## **Part 2 – Principles for the management and evaluation of teaching activities**

### **1. Teaching and learning**

- (1) Teaching is a traditional and essential function of the University. The University’s teaching is the most visible of its many functions in the society of which it is part. A primary goal of the University is to maintain and enhance its position as an outstanding provider of high quality undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. To the best of its capacity, the University will allocate the support and resources necessary to achieve this goal.
- (2) The primary aim of teaching within the University is to facilitate student learning. The University ensures the quality of teaching through a process of continual renewal and improvement informed by reflection, critical review and awareness of changing circumstances. The University is committed to creating an academic climate that fosters learning, scholarship and the application of research findings to improve teaching practice.
- (3) Teaching includes the development and evaluation of courses and units of study; selection, development and application of suitable teaching-learning strategies; assessment and examination; supervision and mentoring; evaluation; consultation with students and other stakeholders; and staff development to support quality teaching.
- (4) The University’s teaching programs aim to provide a rich diversity of formal and informal learning opportunities for students. University teaching will challenge students and encourage them to reach their full potential. To ensure a vibrant learning community, the University aims to admit an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students, including an agreed minimum proportion who have suffered social and educational disadvantage.

### **2. Academic structures and responsible devolution**

- (1) The University is a large, comprehensive institution offering a remarkable diversity of learning opportunities. The University is committed to offering the advantages of its comprehensive diversity to students in academically appropriate ways, unhindered by unnecessary administrative barriers or complexity.
- (2) The University has made gains in responsiveness and financial efficiency through the devolution of academic, administrative and financial responsibilities. It aims to continue to promote devolution of responsibility and authority wherever further gains are indicated.
- (3) Responsible devolution requires clear and comprehensive delegations of authority to undertake normal administrative action. The framework for responsible devolution is set out in the documents

Delegations of Authority — Administrative Functions  
Delegations of Authority — Academic Functions.

These documents provide guidance for making decisions within the policy framework of the University, and also within unusual and exceptional circumstances not covered by existing policy.

- (4) The devolution of academic responsibilities and authorities takes place primarily through the collegial structures of faculties and departments, and their respective academic leaders, the deans and heads of departments. The University's three Colleges, and the College Pro-Vice-Chancellors, have a key role in aligning the allocation of resources with the academic directions of the Colleges.
- (5) The University may establish boards, centres, institutes and other structures to promote its aims. The responsibilities and authorities of these structures are established by relevant policies and terms of reference.
- (6) While embracing the advantages of devolution, the University maintains a number of its functions centrally, particularly in situations involving cross-disciplinary academic activities, institutional accountability or where widely adopted practices can lead to economies of scale. The Academic Board is responsible for many of the University's centralized academic functions.

### **3. Faculties and deans**

- (1) Faculties and deans are required to determine all matters concerning teaching programs in that faculty, subject to the authority of Senate and the Academic Board.
- (2) These requirements include planning, organizational and managerial responsibilities, as well as responsibility for quality assurance.
- (3) Faculties and deans are authorized to establish structures to plan, manage and review faculty teaching programs, provided that such structures address statutory requirements (including those of accreditation bodies) and the requirements of the University. Faculties are required to establish a Postgraduate Board of Studies, or equivalent, and a Teaching and Learning Committee, or equivalent, to align with University planning and reporting procedures.
- (4) Deans have executive academic responsibilities pursuant to resolutions of Senate, Academic Board, and faculties. They also have management responsibilities assigned by the Vice-Chancellor and other senior officers. The management responsibilities include oversight of academic quality assurance for the faculty's teaching programs.
- (5) Deans ensure that faculty offices maintain and update all documentation for policy and procedures relating to the faculty's academic programs, including documentation for courses and units of study.

### **4. Courses and Units of Study**

- (1) Award courses are planned, managed, delivered and reviewed by faculties and deans under the general authority of the Academic Board and the Vice-Chancellor.
- (2) All award courses are developed and reviewed with the benefit of advice from relevant communities and, where appropriate, professional bodies.
- (3) Academic pathways to the University's award courses require students to select appropriate sequences of units of study, the building blocks of award courses. In

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some faculties, units of study are managed by the faculty itself. In other faculties, units of study are managed by departments and heads of departments under the general supervision of faculties and deans.

- (4) Many units of study are available to students in more than one award course. It is common for students of one faculty to take units of study supervised by another faculty. The interests of such students are guarded by mandatory cross-faculty consultative arrangements.

## 5. Quality assurance

- (1) The Academic Board, faculties, and departments have separate and linked responsibilities in assuring the quality of teaching activities. These roles encompass monitoring, evaluating and enhancing the quality of teaching.

- (2) Responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Board

Responsibilities for quality assurance at University level are to:

- (a) define responsibilities for quality assurance at the level of the University, faculties, departments and individual staff and students;
- (b) assist faculties to formulate, implement and review faculty-specific quality assurance mechanisms;
- (c) identify and develop procedures to ensure that information needed to monitor the quality of teaching activities at all levels is available annually and is reviewed regularly in terms of its utility and effectiveness;
- (d) ensure that regular reviews of all aspects of teaching are included in cyclic reviews of departments and faculties;
- (e) ensure that staff development policies include provision for addressing teaching activities and their organisation and management;
- (f) encourage further activities to recognise and reward quality teaching, both by individuals and teams, and oversee their implementation.

- (3) Responsibilities of faculties

Faculties and deans have responsibilities to:

- (a) assure the quality of all award courses and units of study offered by the faculty;
- (b) monitor and advise departments on quality assurance matters for all units of study available in the faculty's award courses;
- (c) establish structures to assure quality in the faculty's teaching program, consistent with statutory requirements and University policy. It is University policy that each faculty should have a Teaching and Learning Committee (or similar body) as a main component of these structures;
- (d) ensure that faculty offices maintain and update policy and procedure documents related to quality assurance within the faculty;
- (e) engage in planning cycles, normally annually, that integrate quality assurance systems and processes and the academic development of the faculty. The University encourages the use of objective, verifiable goals in these planning cycles.

(4) Responsibilities of departments

Departments and heads of departments have responsibilities to:

- (a) assure the quality of all units of study offered by the department;
- (b) establish structures to assure quality in the department's teaching programs, consistent with faculty and university policy;
- (c) maintain and update policy and procedure documents, including unit of study documentation, related to quality assurance within the department;
- (d) provide reports on quality assurance systems as required by faculties or the Academic Board.

### **Part 3 – Code of practice for coursework teaching and learning**

#### **1. Introduction**

- (1) This Code of Practice sets out the general responsibilities of the University, faculties, departments, and individual teachers to create a stimulating and challenging intellectual environment for all students.
- (2) The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the AVCC Guidelines for Effective University Teaching and for Good Practice in Fourth Year Honours Programs.
- (3) The following guidelines must be read in conjunction with University regulations for particular degrees, the defined role of faculties/deans and departments/heads of departments, and Academic Board policies on teaching and learning.

#### **2. Responsibilities at the University level**

The University has the responsibility:

- (1) to ensure that appropriate University policies in respect of undergraduate teaching, learning and assessment are developed, kept under review and are effectively promulgated;
- (2) to abide by the University's policies on occupational health and safety so that students study and work in a safe and healthy environment;
- (3) to ensure that adequate support services and hardware resources are available in such areas as learning assistance and information technology;
- (4) to ensure that adequate development opportunities in teaching, learning and assessment practices are available to teachers of undergraduates through the Institute for Teaching and Learning, and through programs developed by departments, faculties and clinical schools;
- (5) to ensure that clear policies exist with respect to the intellectual property rights of students and that students are aware of those rights;
- (6) to ensure that all students are free in all matters relevant to enrolment, assessment and membership of the University community from discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, gender, age, political or sexual preference, marital status, religion, disability or personal beliefs;

- (7) to uphold the AVCC Guidelines for Effective University Teaching;
- (8) to have students on appropriate University committees, who will be provided with the same information as all other committee members to allow effective participation;
- (9) to uphold information privacy principles relevant to personal student information in accordance with the University's policy on privacy and current legislation, including Freedom of Information;
- (10) to provide a timetabled study vacation period of at least one week before each end of semester examination period except in those faculties where this practice is inappropriate;
- (11) to ensure a quality learning environment, including appropriate and properly maintained facilities.

### **3. Responsibilities at the faculty level**

The faculty has the responsibility:

- (1) to ensure that applicants admitted to candidature are properly qualified with respect to the minimum requirements for entry to the course concerned and with respect to the particular program of study proposed;
- (2) to ensure the appropriate timing of compulsory units and the availability of sufficient optional units so that a student passing all units at the first attempt may complete the course of study within the specified minimum time;
- (3) to contribute to course, curriculum and academic staff development through conducting regular evaluation processes, including student evaluations. Reports on the results of student evaluations will be made available to students participating in curriculum development activities;
- (4) where appropriate, to have students on faculty committees, and to provide student members with the same information as other committee members to enable effective participation;
- (5) to adhere to the policies and procedures established by the Academic Board for creating, varying or deleting courses and units of study;
- (6) regularly review assessment practices, including compliance with the Academic Board's Resolutions on Assessment and Examination.

### **4. Responsibilities at the departmental level**

These responsibilities are those of the head of department. They may however in many instances be delegated or given as agencies to an undergraduate co-ordinator or be exercised through a departmental committee. Such delegations and agencies must be established in accordance with the rules expressed in the University's Delegations of Authorities documents.

Some faculties have no internal departmental structure. In such faculties, the responsibilities of departments and heads of departments are undertaken by faculties and deans, respectively.

The Department has the responsibility:

- (1) to encourage staff to participate in workshops, seminars and fora relating to teaching (including those that relate to teaching cross culturally and acquiring skills in non-

discriminatory teaching practice), learning and assessment organized by departments, faculties, clinical schools and the Institute for Teaching and Learning;

- (2) to provide no later than the end of the first week of the commencement of a unit accurate written information concerning all relevant aspects of chosen units and to further provide written advice of the aims and objectives of each unit, attendance and class requirements, the methods of assessment to be used and the weighting of that assessment;
- (3) to ensure that all relevant requirements of the Academic Board's resolutions regarding Assessment and Examination are satisfied;
- (4) to grant special consideration or make special arrangements where performance is adversely affected by documented illness, disability or other serious cause, consistently with Academic Board and faculty policy;
- (5) to provide access by appointment to academic staff outside timetabled class time;
- (6) where appropriate, to have students on departmental committees, and to provide student members with the same information as other committee members to enable effective participation;
- (7) to ensure that units are taught using relevant teaching and learning strategies, including, where appropriate, contemporary information and learning technology tools.

## **5. Responsibilities of students**

Each student has a responsibility:

- (1) to be familiar with all legislative and other requirements for the course as set out in the faculty handbook, unit of study handout, or any other published departmental and faculty guidelines;
- (2) to ensure that all administrative requirements of the faculty and University, such as re-enrolling each year, are met;
- (3) to satisfy attendance and assessment requirements that are prescribed by the University, faculty and department;
- (4) to adhere to the relevant by-laws and rules relating to ethical behaviour and good conduct that are prescribed by the University and relevant professional bodies.

## **Part 4 – Students and the management of teaching**

### **1. Introduction**

- (1) The University is a learning community in which students and staff have a strong sense of shared purpose. The Academic Board encourages faculties, departments and individual lecturers to adopt a *student-centred* approach to teaching, as a means of engaging students and promoting deep learning.
- (2) Student-centred teaching has many of the following qualities:
  - (a) lecturers are confident that students understand the integration of course/unit aims, curricula, teaching methods and assessment practice;

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- (b) students become responsible for their own learning, and receive adequate support to come to accept this responsibility;
  - (c) where appropriate, teaching methods encourage active student engagement with subject materials, in contexts that help students create meaning and insight;
  - (d) student evaluations of their experiences of courses and units are used to improve the learning experiences of future students;
  - (e) students are encouraged to participate in the development and review of courses and units, and more broadly in University governance;
  - (f) faculties and departments establish procedures for seeking regular feedback from students on all matters affecting them in their studies and for involving them, where appropriate, in decisions and discussion affecting their learning, as recommended in the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee's Guidelines for Effective University Teaching;
  - (g) faculties and departments regularly review procedures and processes involving students, to maximize benefits and minimize inconvenience, and to ensure that the unit's academic goals are pre-eminent.

## **2. Student participation in teaching management**

- (1) Student representation on academic bodies
  - (a) There are student members of Senate, Academic Board, Academic Forum, faculties and departments. The chairs of these bodies are encouraged to ensure that new student members are briefed on the role and procedures of the body in question.
  - (b) Committees and working parties established by the bodies listed in 1(a) should have student members, especially where the agenda concerns students.
  - (c) Faculties and departments should maintain and develop staff/student liaison committees, and meetings with student societies, where applicable.
- (2) Student evaluation of academic activities
  - (a) Students' experiences of University facilities, services and courses will be evaluated each year using the University's Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ). Results will be aggregated to faculty- and University-level and provided to all members of the University. Results inform the distribution of performance-based funds through the University's teaching performance indicators and the assessment of the quality of teaching at faculty and university level. They identify areas where further review and intervention is indicated to make quality improvements, and measure progress towards targets specified in Faculty and University Teaching and Learning Plans. An annual report by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) will summarize the results and highlight progress and areas for improvement.
  - (b) Student experiences of units of study will be evaluated at least once every three years, at faculty level.
- (3) Student consultations
  - (a) Consultations between individual lecturers and students, or in small groups, are an important feature of student-centred teaching. Consultations have an

evident remedial role for some students, but also allow good lecturers to monitor the pace and level of their units.

- (b) Faculties, departments and lecturers should acknowledge the importance of individual interviews between staff members and students and reaffirm that the responsibility to use feedback and input from students lies with the staff.
- (c) Faculties are encouraged to prepare and publish students' guides to consultation. The examples from the Arts and Science faculties have much to recommend them. The faculties that might find this the most profitable are the larger ones, those with more than one site, and those whose students may need especial encouragement to seek consultation. The use of the electronic bulletin boards might also be considered.
- (d) Faculty and departmental workload allocation should ensure that lecturers are able to schedule consultation appointments outside timetabled class time.

## **Part 5 – Units of Study**

### **1. Unit of study outlines**

- (1) Departments are responsible for providing, prior to the commencement of a unit of study, information about it to all students and prospective students. The preferred medium is a website, but written information may be provided as an alternative.
- (2) The minimum standard required is:
  - (a) a concise statement of the main aims of the unit expressed in terms of what students are expected to know by the end of it;
  - (b) a list of unit objectives expressed in terms of how that knowledge will be assessed;
  - (c) a concise statement of the links between these objectives and the University's generic attributes for its graduates;
  - (d) a brief description of the contribution to the unit of the different programs of study in which its students may be enrolled;
  - (e) advice on the attendance and class requirements, the methods of assessment to be used and the weighting of that assessment;
  - (f) if the unit has been previously offered, a summary of the results of student evaluations and a description of actions taken by the coordinator in response to the evaluations;
  - (g) basic factual information regarding names and contact details of teaching and administrative staff.

### **2. Unit of study evaluation**

- (1) Units of study will be evaluated at least once every three years, at faculty level.
- (2) Summaries of the results of student evaluations of units will be forwarded by heads of departments or faculty unit co-ordinators to deans for information and action if needed. Deans will refer non-confidential information on the evaluations to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) for advice and comment. Unit of study evaluations may be used to inform

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the University's internal quality audit process, including the annual faculty reviews conducted by Academic Board.

- (3) Units of study may be evaluated by the standard survey form devised by the Institute for Teaching and Learning or another faculty-approved form. Co-ordinators, heads and deans must provide a summary of the results of the most recent student evaluation of units on a unit of study website or in handouts. This summary will refer to actions taken in response to student comments.

## **Part 6 – Academic Planning and Quality Assurance**

### **1. Purpose**

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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) annual reviews of Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans
  - (c) annual reviews of Academic Quality Assurance Systems.
- (3) 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 Quality Assurance Systems and the Board's review of Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans.
- (4) To fulfil its 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 Quality Assurance Systems and of Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans 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.

### **2. Academic Planning**

- (1) Faculties are required to have Teaching and Learning Plans, normally maintained by the faculty Teaching and Learning Committee or equivalent body.
- (2) Teaching and learning plans must have an operational component, setting out goals in a framework admitting of evaluation.
- (3) The University, through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), will provide faculties with an agreed set of performance indicators to assist in planning

and quality assurance. Normally, these indicators will be published in mid-August, for the two preceding semesters.

- (4) Faculties will provide the Academic Board's Teaching and Learning Committee with an annual report on teaching and learning, against the goals specified in the operational plans. These reports will be transmitted to the Board and to Senate, and elements will be captured in the University Annual Report. Normally, reports will be submitted in early September of each year.
- (5) Faculties will undertake reviews and make desired revisions of their Teaching and Learning Plans annually. Normally, the outcome of the review and any revisions will be reported to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) and the Teaching and Learning Committee by early October of each year.

### **3. Quality assurance**

- (1) Part 2(5) of these Resolutions defines the separate and linked responsibilities for academic quality assurance. The present section defines the Academic Board's policies and procedures pursuant to assisting and reviewing faculties' quality assurance practices.
- (2) Self-evaluation reports
  - (a) Faculties are required to provide the Academic Board's Teaching and Learning Committee with an annual self-evaluation of academic quality assurance systems within the faculty. Normally, these reports will be required in early May.
  - (b) The following aspects of academic quality assurance should be addressed in the self-evaluation report, which normally will be 5-10 pages in length:
    - (i) How does the faculty ensure that each course and unit has an appropriate set of aims and outcomes, clearly communicated to and understood by students, and including generic as well as disciplinary skills?
    - (ii) How does the faculty ensure integration of research, including both disciplinary research and evidence about effective learning and teaching, into its undergraduate and postgraduate courses?
    - (iii) How does the faculty ensure that student assessment is effective and contributes to learning, and that the assessment process is well understood by students?
    - (iv) How does the faculty ensure the quality of its teaching and recognise good teaching?
    - (v) What arrangements does the faculty have in place to monitor and support student progress?
    - (vi) How does the faculty ensure the quality of research supervision and training?
    - (vii) What are the faculty's arrangements for evaluation and quality improvement, including the use of student and graduate feedback and other performance indicator data to monitor and enhance performance?

(3) Academic Board Visits

- (a) The Academic Board will initiate visits to faculties to review academic planning and quality assurance systems. Normally, every faculty will receive an annual visit.
- (b) Board-initiated reviews are internal, collegial visits designed to evaluate academic quality assurance systems 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.
- (c) Reviews assist faculties and deans progress towards the goals identified in the University Plan and in Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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.
- (f) 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;
  - (v) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominee.
- (g) No person shall serve on the interview panel for faculties of which they are members.
- (h) 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	✓	✓	✓	✓

- (i) Reviews will be undertaken on a 4-year cycle. The first year of a cycle is designed to evaluate the overall coherence of quality assurance systems in the faculty. Later years will concentrate on particular aspects of course delivery.

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In addition, each year's review will examine progress towards the objectives and targets specified in Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans.

(4) Guidelines for Academic Quality Assurance

The Academic Board has endorsed guidelines for the preparation of faculty self-evaluations of academic quality assurance systems, and for the conduct of Board-initiated visits.

These guidelines are published at the Board's website.

## Part 7 – Academic Record Keeping

### 1. Regulatory context

#### (1) NSW Legislation

The University is subject to three major pieces of government legislation which affect record keeping:

- NSW State Records Act 1998
- NSW Freedom of Information Act 1989
- NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

(a) The State Records Act, *inter alia*, regulates the creation, retention and disposal of records. It enables the State Records Authority to issue mandatory standards for the management of State records. Three standards of particular significance are the Standard on Full and Accurate Records, Standard on Records Management Programs and the Standard on Record keeping in the Electronic Business Environment. Section 21(1) of the Act creates an offence for the unauthorised destruction of State records. Compliance with the State Records Act is monitored by the NSW Auditor General.

All records created for University purposes are State records covered by the Act. This includes hardcopy and electronic records (including email). Examples include: minutes of meetings, student assessment records, communications with students and between colleagues, planning documents and course proposals, communications from bodies and individuals external to the University regarding a student's candidature.

(b) The Freedom of Information Act provides the University community and the general public with an legal right of access to University documents. Some documents may be exempted from release in particular circumstances, for example, to protect the privacy of third parties. [This protection normally does not extend to the views expressed in reports such as examiner's reports or referee's reports; nor does it necessarily extend to the identity of examiners and referees.] The Act also provides the public with the right to amend University documents if they are incomplete, incorrect, or out of date or misleading. Appeals relating to FOI decisions may be taken to the NSW Ombudsman and/or the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal.

Documents under the Freedom of Information Act are the same as those defined as State Records under the State Records Act.

Members of the University community and the general public are able to apply for access to any University document, not just those which concern themselves.

- (c) The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act has at its core a set of information protection principles which regulate the collection, use, management and disclosure of personal information. It creates offences related to the corrupt disclosure of personal information. Complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act may be made to, and investigated by, the University and/or the NSW Privacy Commissioner.

The PPIP Act defines personal information very broadly: "information or an opinion ... about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion."

Individuals may also use the PPIP Act to apply for access to personal information regarding themselves.

## (2) University Policies

The University has adopted policies relating to the three areas outlined above. These policies commit the University to support and implement the requirements of the three Act. The policies are:

Record keeping Policy  
Freedom of Information  
Privacy Policy

These policies may be found on the Archives and Records Management Services website at: [www.usyd.edu.au/arms](http://www.usyd.edu.au/arms)

The Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice sets out standards for record keeping related to research and research training.

These policies should be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Conduct.

## 2. Academic record keeping

University policy requires that appropriate and complete records must be created and retained of all aspects of the management and evaluation of teaching.

- It is important that anyone examining the records associated with the teaching and assessment of students be able to understand what occurred and the reasons for any decisions or actions taken. To ensure transparency and accountability it is necessary to document all stages of academic decision making.
- The creation of full and accurate records should be a routine task. It is important that records be created to support any and all decisions made about a student. All such records should be captured into the appropriate record keeping system to ensure authenticity, reliability and accessibility. Keeping proper records protects the rights of all those involved, staff and students.
- Examples of appropriate record keeping: Interactions with students, particularly meetings, conversations and email or other written exchanges between supervisors and research students or consultations between academic staff and undergraduate students, must be documented. The level of the documentation will depend upon the nature of the exchange. For routine, low level matters, a diary note or file note of the issues discussed and any decisions or agreements reached will be sufficient. For more significant matters,

particularly those related to unsatisfactory progress or advice to contact any student support services, a report and copies of all correspondence must be placed on the official student file.

- To ensure that the University's records are comprehensive and reflect the positions of all parties, any significant correspondence from the student must also be placed on their file. Special consideration documentation and medical certificates should be placed routinely on student files.
- All meetings, both formal and informal, where a student's academic progress or the assessment of work is discussed, should be properly documented. As with all records, the record should be dated and indicate those present and give the full text of any decisions agreed upon. In addition, the reasons for decisions taken at the meeting should be recorded. The minutes of these meetings must be retained on an official file.

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## Academic Board Statement

### Guidelines for Academic Quality Assurance Systems

#### Faculty Self-Evaluation Reports Academic Board Visits

##### 1. Introduction

These Guidelines are designed to

- (1) assist faculties when preparing self-evaluation reports on Academic Quality Assurance Systems, and
- (2) to provide a resource for the establishment of agendas for Board-initiated visits to faculties to review academic activities.

They may also assist faculties in the preparation and revision of Teaching and Learning Plans. The items presented in this statement has been drawn from many sources. Pending publication of guidelines by the Australian University Quality Agency, the following URLs can be consulted for detailed accounts of academic quality assurance systems in other countries:

<a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk">www.qaa.ac.uk</a>	(United Kingdom)
<a href="http://www.aau.ac.nz">www.aau.ac.nz</a>	(New Zealand)
<a href="http://www.chea.org">www.chea.org</a>	(USA).

##### 2. Faculty self-evaluations of quality assurance systems

Examples of topics that might be addressed under each aspect of a self-evaluation report:

*How does the faculty ensure that each course and unit has an appropriate set of aims and outcomes, clearly communicated to and understood by students, and including generic as well as disciplinary skills?*

- systems for informing students about course and unit expectations and ensuring that students understand them
- ways in which relations between generic and disciplinary skills in the curriculum are monitored
- methods for ensuring that courses and units of study enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes
- methods for providing coherence between units of study and courses

*How does the faculty ensure integration of research, including both disciplinary research and evidence about effective learning and teaching, into its undergraduate and postgraduate courses?*

- how links between current disciplinary research and the research expertise of staff and the curriculum are managed
- how links between developments in the theory and practice of university teaching and learning and the curriculum are managed

*How does the faculty ensure that student assessment is effective and contributes to learning, and that the assessment process is well understood by students?*

- methods for ensuring that assessments enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes
- methods for ensuring that assessment practices and standards are fair and equitable
- methods for ensuring that assessments provide students with prompt and effective feedback on their progress
- how information from assessments is used to improve teaching and learning
- methods for ensuring that students understand the assessment processes

*How does the faculty ensure the quality of its teaching and recognise good teaching?*

- methods for monitoring the breadth, depth, pace, variety and challenge in teaching
- how decisions about the selection of particular teaching strategies in relation to student learning outcomes are monitored
- methods used to enhance the quality of teaching, including staff development, mentoring and peer review
- how the faculty supports, recognises and rewards good teaching

*What arrangements does the faculty have in place to monitor and support student progression?*

- arrangements for identifying students at risk of non-completion or failure and the processes used to intervene in these cases
- the use of learning resources and academic support to assist student learning outcomes

*How does the faculty ensure the quality of research supervision and training?*

- arrangements for ensuring high standards of supervision
- mechanisms in place for ensuring effective completion and retention
- how the research climate for students and provision of resources to support research are monitored
- the use of student and/or graduate views to improve the experiences of research higher degree students

*What are the faculty's arrangements for evaluation and quality improvement, including the use of student and graduate feedback and other performance indicator data to monitor and enhance performance? How does it recognise good teaching?*

- mechanisms in place for collecting *and acting on the results* of student and graduate feedback on teaching, units of study and courses
- arrangements for applying University performance indicator data to improving educational quality
- consistency between University requirements and faculty QA and improvement mechanisms
- methods used to monitor progress towards goals specified in the faculty's teaching and learning plan

### 3. Board-initiated visits

The Academic Board commissions visits to faculties to assist in the evaluation of quality assurance systems. Visiting teams will have faculty Teaching and Learning Plans and self-evaluation reports on Quality Assurance Systems.

The following items are suggestions for the kinds of matters that might be explored during faculty visits. It should be clear that any one visit could explore only a small subset of the listed matters.

(1) Agenda for meetings with students

*Introduction*

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.

(i) *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?

(ii) *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?

(iii) *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?

(iv) *Student progression and support*

- What induction procedures are in operation?
- What are the arrangements for academic support?
- Are there suitable unit-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?

(v) *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?

(2) Agenda for meetings 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.

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.

(a) Aims and outcomes

- (i) 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.

- (ii) 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.

- (iii) 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?

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- 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.

(b) Curricula

- (i) 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.

- (ii) 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.

(c) Assessment

- (i) 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.

- (ii) 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.

- (iii) 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.

(d) Teaching and learning

- (i) 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

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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.

(e) Student progression

- (i) 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.

(f) Learning resources

- (i) 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.

- (ii) 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.

- (g) Quality assurance and improvement

- (i) 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