



The University of Sydney

Guidelines for Academic Board Faculty Reviews

Approved by Academic Board on: 24/03/04

Date of effect: 25/03/04

1. Purpose

The purpose of Academic Board Reviews is to assist the University to encourage the maintenance and development of high standards of teaching, scholarship and research. Reviews are intended:

- To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of faculty quality assurance arrangements, through peer review of processes, outcomes and the evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness;
- To assist faculties to identify and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses;
- To support faculties in maintaining a systematic and continuous cycle of planning, monitoring and improvement;
- To promote best practice throughout the University;
- To assist faculties to evaluate achievements in relation to the University's Strategic Plan;
- To promote ownership of quality assurance activities throughout the University; and
- To fulfil the University's requirements for both internal and external accountability.

2. Principles

- Excellence in teaching, learning, and research is a core value that is essential to the University's mission, goals and activities. The University's quality assurance processes are intrinsic to the work of all staff undertaking or supporting teaching, learning and research.
- The University evaluates its achievements against appropriate national and international benchmarks. Its quality assurance methods are evidence-based. Outcomes and feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, employers and the community) provide the basis for analyses and conclusions on which improvements are planned.
- The University's procedures reflect the principles of rigorous peer review. We aim to identify areas for improvement, foster collaboration and exchange of best practice, and encourage an ethos of critical self-evaluation.
- The University's quality assurance activities are part of normal and continuous cycle of planning, monitoring and improvement. Although the results from them will be useful for purposes of external review, they are not created with the prime purpose of meeting external requirements.
- The University's quality assurance processes are designed to be efficient and to work within the principles of equity and natural justice.

- The University's quality assurance activities will themselves be the subject of continuous review and improvement.

3. Coverage

Each Faculty will normally undergo an Academic Board Review every five years, although a shorter cycle is discretionary.

Academic Board Reviews evaluate both the faculty's internal quality assurance processes (the processes that the faculty uses to assure itself of the quality of its academic activities in relation to teaching, learning, research and research training) and the outcomes that reflect the success of the quality assurance processes.

Academic Board Reviews embrace the full range of faculty activities, with particular reference to their contribution to the University's Strategic Plan. They cover the following:

- Quality Teaching and Learning
- Diversity, Access and Equity
- Excellence in Research
- Internationalisation
- Engagement with Industry and the Professions
- Effective Management
- Service to the Community

The Academic Board's five-yearly Review process complements each faculty's internal quality assurance processes, ensuring that they are robust and provide the necessary continuity in the cycle of planning, monitoring and improvement.

The Chair of the Academic Board has responsibility for scheduling the Reviews.

4. The Review Process

A summary of the Faculty Review Process is attached at Appendix I.

- (1) **Faculty supplied with Information Package.** The Information Package includes Guidelines for Academic Board Reviews, Guidelines for preparing the Self-Evaluation Report, a schedule and timetable for the Review and a statistical package which includes student progress rates, results from student surveys, data on research performance, equity performance and International figures. Faculties are also supplied with an information sheet for students involved in the Review (see Appendix II)

A checklist for the Faculty Review Process is attached at Appendix III.

- (2) **Submission of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER).** The faculty submits a SER four weeks in advance of the review date. In addition, the faculty provides copies of its strategic plans dealing with University goals, including a faculty Teaching and Learning Plan and Research Plan.

Faculties provide six (hard) copies and one electronic copy (to supplement, not replace, the hard copies). The SER will be a single, bound document containing all relevant material for the Review. It will have a Table of Contents, section numbers throughout, page numbers throughout, and be cross-referenced where appropriate. As far as possible, documents should be Microsoft Word documents.

- (3) **Review meeting.** The Review Team visits the faculty and meets with the dean, senior staff, other staff and students (including undergraduate, postgraduate research and postgraduate coursework students). The duration of the meeting is dependent on size of the faculty, but is usually a day or a day and a half. The visit will conclude with the Chair providing an oral summary of the main findings of the Review Team to the Dean.
- (4) **Report of Review Meeting.** The Review Report is prepared by the Review Team Secretary in consultation with the Review Team Chair. The Review Report includes Commendations, Recommendations for Improvement, and examples of best practice relevant to other areas of the University. A template for the Report is provided in Appendix IV.

The Report is forwarded to the faculty within four to six weeks of the visit. Any factual errors should be drawn to the attention of the Review Team Secretary by the faculty. In consultation with the Chair, the Review Team Secretary corrects errors of fact in the Report.

- (5) **Report forwarded to the Teaching and Learning Committee.** The Review Team Secretary forwards the Report to the Teaching and Learning Committee for noting.

At the end of the Review cycle, an aggregated Report is forwarded to the Teaching and Learning Committee. It includes areas of best practice and areas for improvement across the University.

- (6) **Report forwarded to the Academic Board.** The Teaching and Learning Committee forward the Report of the Review to the Academic Board. The Report now becomes a public document and is made available through the Academic Board website.
- (7) **Faculty submits Progress Report.** The faculty supplies a progress report within one year of receiving the Report or as part of the next Academic Board Review (whichever is the closer). This progress report is provided as part of the package of information to members of the subsequent Review Team.

5. Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities

Faculties are the educational and organisational groupings responsible for award courses, and the object of the review process.

Quality Assurance means the planned and systematic activities implemented within the University's academic and support framework that provide demonstrated evidence and confidence that the University is meeting its mission and goals.

Review Report will usually contain the following information:

- Introductory section containing list of Review Team, names of senior faculty interviewed and numbers of students and staff who participated in the interview process
- Background section containing faculty context, achievements, and any recent changes

- Quality Assurance section containing a summary of the faculty's quality assurance structures and processes and identification of process strengths and weaknesses
- Sections for the University Goals containing main findings cross-referenced to Conclusion
- Conclusion containing list of Commendations and Recommendations
- Appendices containing visit agenda, list of documentation considered by the Review Team and the faculty's Self-Evaluation Report

Review Teams comprise:

- Chair: Chair of the Academic Board or nominee;
- One member of a pool of reviewers of academic staff trained or experienced in quality assurance processes established by the Academic Board;
- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) or nominee;
- The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or nominee

Review Teams may be accompanied by an observer. Observers have no role in the interview process. Their function is to:

- Observe the interview process and report its effectiveness to the Chair
- Make suggestions for process improvement.

N.B. all team members must be from outside the Faculty undergoing review. Panel members will disclose any potential conflict of interest.

In addition to visiting the faculty on the day(s) of the visit, members of the Review Team are required to:

- attend a pre-visit meeting at which the procedure for the visit will be discussed and the questions compiled
- sign off a draft report of the review

Membership and Terms of Reference for Review Teams are attached in Appendix V.

Review Team Chair will:

- chair the pre-visit meeting
- approve the resulting list of questions
- chair the visit meeting, monitor time and ensure all appropriate questions have been asked
- provide an oral report, at the end of the interviews, to the Dean on the main findings
- review and edit the draft report
- signoff the report

Review Team Secretary will:

- compile and organise an appropriate list of questions
- take minutes of the proceedings of the interviews
- write a draft report of findings of the review, including draft Commendations and Recommendations

- liaise with Review Team Chair and members of the Review Team to achieve signoff for the report
- liaise with Dean of faculty to eliminate factual errors from the report
- send the final report to the Teaching and Learning Committee of Academic Board

Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is supplied to the Review Team by the faculty and is included in the Review Report. The SER should critically describe the faculty's teaching and learning processes and University goals as interpreted by the faculty, rather than the outcomes and standards themselves, outlining and evaluating the systems in place to safeguard quality. Weaknesses as well as strengths should be addressed, and actions undertaken or planned to remedy weaknesses should be described.

6. Authority

(1) Development

These Guidelines replace the separate Guidelines for Phases I and II of the Academic Board Reviews.

(2) Management responsibility

The Chair of the Academic Board has management responsibility for the Guidelines.

(3) Implementation and monitoring

The Chair of the Academic Board has responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Guidelines.

(4) Review

The Chair of the Academic Board will initiate a review of these Guidelines as part of the five-yearly Academic Board faculty review process.

(5) Communication

The Chair of the Academic Board has responsibility for communicating the Guidelines and authorising updates.

(6) Contact

For information contact:

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7. Related information

- (1) Related University legislation, resolutions, policies and procedures include:

- (a) Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Policy at http://www.usyd.edu.au/quality/about/docs/quality_assurance_improvement_policy.pdf
 - (b) Guidelines for Preparing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) for Academic Board Phase 2 at <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/00000ae.pdf>
- (2) University policies superseded or replaced by this policy:
- (a) Guidelines for Faculty Reviews of Teaching, Learning and Research Training, July 2002 at <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/0000083.pdf>
 - (b) Guidelines for Academic Board Review Phase 2, Nov 2003 at <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/00000ac.pdf>

APPENDIX I SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

Action	Person in Faculty with responsibility	Person on Review Team with responsibility	Timescale
1 Identify dates of Review and advise Faculty		Quality Assurance Officer (Teaching and Learning) in consultation with Chair of Ac Board	Annual program is established the previous November
2 Appoint Review Team Chair and members		Quality Assurance Officer (Teaching and Learning) in consultation with Chair of Ac Board	Panels for the annual program developed at the commencement of the year
3 Prepare SER and supporting documentation	Faculty Review Co-ordinator		ideally to commence 6 months before the Review
4 Submit bound copies of SER and supporting documentation, and electronic copy of SER to the Review Team Secretary	Faculty Review Co-ordinator		4 weeks before the date of the Review meeting
5 Circulate copies of document to the Review Team		Quality Assurance Officer (Teaching and Learning)	3 weeks before the date of the Review meeting
6 Collate initial feedback from the Review Team on the documentation and circulate to Review Team		Review Team Secretary	10 days before the Review meeting
7 Faculty to advise Review Team Secretary of names of all students and staff attending the meeting and room location for meetings	Faculty Review Co-ordinator		10 days before Review meeting
8 Pre-Review Meeting of all members of the Review Team		Review Team Secretary	1 week before Review
9 Review Meeting	Faculty Manager or nominee to arrange rooms, catering and parking if necessary	Review Team Secretary liaise with Review Team and Faculty	Meeting date

10	Prepare and circulate initial draft report, first to Review Team Chair and then to other members of Review Team		Review Team Secretary draft and circulate. Review Team Chair and members read and provide feedback	ideally within 2 weeks of the Review date
11	Report to Faculty		Review Team Secretary	within 4-6 weeks of Review
12	Faculty comments on any factual errors in the Report to Review Team Secretary	Dean/Faculty Review Co-ordinator		within 2 weeks of Faculty receiving Report
13	Factual errors corrected and Appendices incorporated		Review Team Secretary	Within 1 week of receipt
14	Report to University Teaching and Learning Committee		Review Team Secretary	within 2 months of Review
15	Faculty update on response to Recommendations	Dean/Faculty Review Co-ordinator		within 1 year of receiving Review Report

APPENDIX II INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS BEING INVITED TO MEET WITH REVIEW TEAMS

The following note should be provided to all students that are attending interviews with the Academic Board Review Team during the visit.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with the Academic Board Review Team that will be visiting the Faculty of on You, along with other **undergraduate/postgraduate/research** students will meet with the Review Team from

00.00am/pm to 00.00am/pm, day, date, in Room

Purpose of the Review process

All Faculties experience Review periodically as a standard part of the University's quality assurance activities. An important aim is to help Faculties provide the best possible experiences for their students. Review is a collegial process carried out under the auspices of the University's Academic Board and designed to provide useful and constructive feedback to Faculties.

Purpose of the meetings with students within the Review

The purpose of the meetings with students is for the Review Team to gather, first hand, student views on their experience in the Faculty.

Confidentiality

Anything you say to the Review Team will be treated in confidence. Feedback from students is often built in to the content of the written Report of the Review, but it is not attributed in any way to individuals.

The types of issues the Review Team might be interested in discussing with you

- Issues arising from the Academic Board's recent review (in 2001 or 2002) of the Faculty's teaching, learning and research training. In addition to matters pertaining specifically to teaching, learning and research training, these might also relate to matters such as how well the Faculty's mechanisms for collecting student feedback are working (eg student participation in Faculty committees, the staff/student consultative committee, end of unit evaluation questionnaires), and, how the Faculty responds to student feedback (eg whether you are explicitly advised of resulting changes).
- Student support mechanisms – how well supported you feel by the Faculty – what arrangements there are to identify and support students in difficulty, or with particular language or study skills needs.

- Diversity, Access and Equity – whether you feel part of a diverse student group (eg diverse in relation to indigenous Australians, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and gender balance), and whether you are aware of any Faculty strategies to promote and support diversity.
 - Research – to what extent you feel that you benefit from being part of a vibrant research culture.
 - Internationalisation – your perceptions of the Faculty’s strategy in relation to internationalisation. This might relate to, for example, components in the curriculum with an international focus, an international dimension in assignments, opportunities for student exchange or study abroad, opportunities to study foreign languages, exposure to international research, international student numbers in the Faculty.
 - Engagement with Industry and the Professions – what are your perceptions of the ways that the Faculty engages with the relevant industry/professions? This might relate to, for example, opportunities for professional placements, the relevance of the skills and knowledge you develop during your course to the relevant profession/industry, the extent to which your educational experience exposes you to the latest developments in professional practice (for example through visiting lecturers, guest speakers, assignments/research related to the workplace).
 - Community Service – what are your perceptions of the Faculty’s strategies to service its various communities (eg the population of Sydney, employers of its graduates, local schools)? This might include, for example, community based research projects, outreach activities to Sydney high schools, contributions by staff and students to local, national and international debate, activities that might benefit or enrich communities (eg exhibitions, public lectures, services to the public).
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APPENDIX III FACULTY CHECK-LIST FOR REVIEW PROCESS

Action	Person in Faculty with responsibility	Timescale
1. Dean to nominate senior member of staff from within the Faculty to act as the Faculty Review Co-ordinator (likely to be a senior member of staff such as the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee or an Associate Dean)	Dean	ideally 6 months before the Review
2. Prepare SER and supporting documentation	Faculty Review Co-ordinator	ideally to commence 6 months before the Review
3. Submit electronic copies of SER and supporting documentation to the Review Team Secretary	Faculty Review Co-ordinator	4 weeks before the date of the Review meeting
4. Faculty to advise Review Team Secretary of names of all students and staff attending the meeting and room location for meetings	Faculty Review Co-ordinator	10 days before Review meeting
5. Review Meeting	Faculty Review Co-ordinator or nominee to arrange rooms, catering and parking, if necessary	Meeting date
6. Report received by Faculty (sent to the Dean, the Faculty Review Co-ordinator and the Faculty Manager/Executive Officer)		within 4-6 weeks of Review
7. Faculty comments on Report to Review Team Secretary	Dean and Faculty Review Co-ordinator	within 2 weeks of Faculty receiving Report
8. Faculty outline of how it will build Recommendations into Faculty planning	Dean and Faculty Review Co-ordinator	within 2 months of receiving Review report
9. Faculty update on response to Recommendations	Dean and Faculty Review Co-ordinator	within 1 year of receiving Review Report

APPENDIX IV	TEMPLATE FOR THE FACULTY REVIEW REPORT
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This template should be used as a rough guide only. It is not intended to be prescriptive. Different report structures may be more appropriate according to the discussions at the meetings.

Front page:	Name of Faculty Review date Table of contents
Introduction:	Review Team membership Faculty staff participating in discussions (only senior staff named) (??) Student groups participating in the discussions (no names) Documentation considered (cross reference to Appendix)
Background:	This section is optional. If included it would cover matters such as Faculty context, achievements, hallmarks, recent changes
Quality Assurance:	Summary of the Faculty's quality assurance structures and processes, identifying any perceived strengths and weaknesses
Quality Teaching and Learning:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Diversity, Access and Equity:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Excellence in Research:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Internationalisation:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Engagement with Industry and the Professions:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Effective Management:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Service to the Community:	Main findings cross-referenced to Conclusions
Conclusions:	Commendations – under relevant sub-heads and cross-referenced to Report Recommendations - under relevant sub-heads and cross-referenced to Report
Appendices:	Program for the visit List of documentation considered by the Review Team Faculty's Self-Evaluation Report

The report should be an analytical account of the findings of the Review Team. It should be as brief as possible and not go into unnecessary detail. The Report should elucidate how the Conclusions have been arrived at. This might cover, for example, the issues investigated, the Faculty's objectives, how these relate to outcomes and feedback, how quality assurance

mechanisms monitor the achievement of the objectives, and the Team's analysis and conclusions (which will identify strengths and weaknesses). The Report is not a record of meeting and is not intended to necessarily cover all matters discussed. Review Teams are not empowered to make recommendations for additional resources.

The Report will normally be drafted on behalf of the Review Team by the Review Team Secretary in consultation with the Review Team Chair. It will be circulated to the Review Team for agreement before being forwarded to the Faculty for comment on factual accuracy. Faculties will be provided with a format for comments eliciting: the precise reference within the report; an explanation of the point at issue; the reasoning or evidence to support the comment; and (if appropriate) a suggested re-wording.



APPENDIX V MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF REVIEW TEAMS

Membership:

A typical Review Teams will include the following members:

(Note: all members shall be from outside the Faculty undergoing Review)

- Chair: Chair of the Academic Board or nominee;
- One member from a panel established by the Academic Board;
- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) or nominee;
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or nominee.

NB: No member of the pool of reviewers shall be on the review team for the Faculty of which he or she is a member. Other persons will disclose any potential conflict of interest in the faculties being reviewed.

Terms of Reference:

Phase 2 Review Teams will consider the scope of Faculty activity with particular reference to the Faculty's contribution to the achievement of the University's seven Goals. The Terms of Reference described below (which directly correlate with the Goals) will be considered in the light of:

- Faculty objectives and processes;
 - evidence of outcomes (and how these fit with targets and goals);
 - evidence of feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, employers and the community);
 - the quality assurance processes by which the Faculty evaluates outcomes and feedback and plans improvement.
1. The Faculty's response to the Recommendations resulting from its Academic Board Review of Teaching, Learning and Research Training (Phase 1 Review);
 2. The Faculty's effectiveness in supporting diversity, access and equity for its students and staff in relation to, for example: gender balance; participation of indigenous Australians; successful participation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities and people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds;
 3. The Faculty's research performance and the policies, processes and practices that promote and support excellence (in terms of internationally recognised standards);
 4. The success of the Faculty's strategies to enhance the University's position as a university of high standing in the international community of scholars, for example in relation to: links in research and consulting activities and staff and student exchange and collaboration; mechanisms to identify, encourage and reward contributions to international activities by students and staff; establishment of international benchmarks within disciplines.
 5. The effectiveness of the Faculty's engagement with industry and the professions in relation to, for example: arrangements for developing and maintaining professional

links; relevance of curricula and graduate skills; provision of expectation and opportunity for ongoing graduate education; involvement of staff in professional associations, government agencies and professional regulatory bodies;

6. The effectiveness of the Faculty's management structures and practices (for both human and physical resources) in relation to, for example: strategic planning that makes effective use of management information as part of goal-setting; strategies to promote equity, diversity, and environmental awareness in the staff and student environment.
7. The Faculty's contribution to the communities it serves locally, nationally and internationally in relation to, for example: contribution to local, national and international debate; provision of expert services; preparation of graduates for leadership roles.