ACADEMIC QUALITY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose
The Academic Quality Committee assists the Academic Board in ensuring the maintenance of the highest standards and quality in teaching, scholarship and research at the University of Sydney and, in this context, advises the Academic Board on receipt of reports on the quality of, and current standards in teaching, scholarship and research, in accordance with the University of Sydney (Academic Board) Rule 2017 and the University of Sydney (Delegations of Authority – Academic Functions) Rule 2016.

Terms of Reference
1. To play an active role in assuring the quality of teaching, scholarship and research in the University and co-ordinate and maintain an overview of the academic activities of all academic units.
2. To monitor issues relating to quality in relation to undergraduate and postgraduate award courses, and to make recommendations to the Academic Board.
3. To monitor issues relating to quality in relation to research, and to make recommendations to the Academic Board.
4. To monitor issues relating to quality in relation to research training, including the assessment and examination of Higher Degree by Research candidates, and to make recommendations to the Academic Board.
5. To provide academic oversight in relation to domains 2.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.4, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5, 5.3.7, 5.4.2, 6.1.4, 6.3.1 (b) – (d), 6.3.2 (a), (c) – (h) inclusive of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015.
6. In pursuit of the above objectives, to:
   6.1. request reports from, or refer matters to Faculties, University Schools, schools, departments, University Executive portfolios, etc., for consideration and action as required;
   6.2. consider and take action as required on reports or academic submissions from academic units
   6.3. initiate and oversee, in collaboration with the University Executive, a formal and regular program of review of academic activities of all academic units.
7. To ensure undergraduate and postgraduate coursework education are compliant with appropriate rules, policies and procedures, including, but not limited to the:
   • University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2014
   • Coursework Policy 2014
   • Assessment Procedures 2011
   • Learning and Teaching Policy 2015
   • Learning and Teaching Procedures 2016
   • Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015
   • Academic Honesty Procedures 2016
8. To ensure that research training is compliant with appropriate rules, policies and procedures, including, but not limited to the:
   • University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule
   • Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013
   • Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2015
   • Essential Resources for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2016

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9. To receive reports and recommendations from the Higher Degree by Research Examinations Sub-Committee for comment and transmission to the Academic Board.

10. To receive reports from, and provide advice to, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), The Registrar and, where appropriate, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) on quality assurance and other matters relating to coursework study.

11. To receive reports from, and provide advice to, appropriate portfolios on quality assurance and other matters relating to higher degree by research training in domain 4.1 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*.

12. To obtain information or reports from any faculty, school or department, the Library or other academic unit on academic matters relating to coursework or research training studies.

13. To provide regular reports on its activities under its terms of reference to the Academic Board.

14. To consider and report on any matter referred to it by the Academic Board, or its committees, the University Executive or the Vice-Chancellor.

**Constitution**

*Ex Officio Members*

- the Chair of the Committee
- the Chair of the Academic Board, or nominee
- the Chair of the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee, if not already a member
- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar), or nominee
- the President of the Students' Representative Council, or nominee
- the President of the Sydney University Postgraduate Students’ Association, or nominee

*Appointed members*

The Academic Board shall, on nomination by members of the Academic Board, appoint:

- one academic staff member from each Faculty and University School; and
- at least one undergraduate and one postgraduate student member.

The Academic Board shall, on the recommendation of the Chair of the Academic Board, appoint as its representatives three elected staff members of the Academic Board. On the recommendation of any two of these members, an item before the Committee will be referred to the Academic Board as a starred item for consideration.

**Deputy Chair**

The Committee may, on the nomination of its Chair, appoint one member to act as Deputy Chair.

**Co-opted members**

The Committee may co-opt additional members. Co-opted members may be selected from the members of the Academic Board or the wider University community or may express interest directly to the Chair of the Committee, but must have an interest or experience in issues considered by the Committee.
Committee. The term of office of members co-opted by the Committee shall be specified at the time of co-option and such members shall have all rights and privileges of other members.

Assessors and Reviewers
The Committee may invite and appoint assessors and reviewers to assist it with its functions, including, as appropriate, from outside the University.

Observers
Staff or students of the University may attend meetings as observers, and may, with the permission of the Chair of the committee, address the meeting on issues being considered by it.

Frequency of Meetings
The Committee shall meet at least five times a year.

Voting Rights
Voting is restricted to ex-officio members, appointed members and co-opted members.

Quorum
A quorum for a meeting of the Committee shall be seven members.

Sub-Committees
- Higher Degree by Research Examinations Sub-Committee
ACADEMIC QUALITY COMMITTEE

HESF Domains

The Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 domains relevant to this committee include:

2 Learning Environment

2.2 Diversity and Equity

1. Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students’ backgrounds.

2. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3. Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

5 Institutional Quality Assurance

5.2 Academic and Research Integrity

2. Preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches.

4. Academic and research integrity and accountability for academic and research integrity are maintained in arrangements with any other party involved in the provision of higher education, including placements, collaborative research, research training and joint award of qualifications.

5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

1. All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

2. A comprehensive review includes the design and content of each course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students’ achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

3. Comprehensive reviews of courses of study are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring, of the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.

4. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:

   a. analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and
   
   b. the assessment methods and grading of students’ achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

5. All students have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and student feedback informs institutional monitoring, review and improvement activities.

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7. The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

5.4 Delivery with Other Parties
2. When a course of study, any parts of a course of study, or research training are delivered through arrangements with another party(ies), whether in Australia or overseas, the registered higher education provider remains accountable for the course of study and verifies continuing compliance of the course of study with the standards in the *Higher Education Standards Framework* that relate to the specific arrangement.

6 Governance and Accountability

6.1 Corporate Governance
4. The governing body takes steps to develop and maintain an institutional environment in which freedom of intellectual inquiry is upheld and protected, students and staff are treated equitably, the wellbeing of students and staff is fostered, informed decision making by students is supported and students have opportunities to participate in the deliberative and decision making processes of the higher education provider.

6.3 Academic Governance
1. Processes and structures are established and responsibilities are assigned that collectively:
   b. set and monitor institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
   c. establish and maintain academic leadership at an institutional level, consistent with the types and levels of higher education offered, and
   d. provide competent advice to the corporate governing body and management on academic matters, including advice on academic outcomes, policies and practices.
2. Academic oversight assures the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training effectively, including by:
   a. developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness
   c. critically scrutinising, approving and, if authority to self-accredit is held, accrediting or advising on approving and accrediting, courses of study and their associated qualifications
   d. maintaining oversight of academic and research integrity, including monitoring of potential risks
   e. monitoring and initiating action to improve performance against institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
   f. critically evaluating the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations
   g. evaluating the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review and improvement of academic activities, and
   h. monitoring and reporting to the corporate governing body on the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training.

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