THE FIRST WORD ON QUALITY

Our preparations for the AUQA audit in August are on schedule. We have had valuable input from two external consultants who have examined our draft Performance Portfolio and conducted a desk audit of our work on community engagement. Their criticisms have led to refinements that will set us up well for the audit visit.

Once the final changes have been made to the Portfolio and the Vice-Chancellor is happy with it we propose to distribute it widely within the University. There will be sessions on each campus in the lead up to the audit that will review the document with staff.

This preparatory work is as important as the feedback the University will receive from the audit panel, because it allows us to take stock of what we are doing well and what we need to improve. The panel will check that we have got this self-assessment right, at least from their point of view, but our own honest appraisal of our efforts is the primary stimulus to self improvement.

Professor John O’Gorman
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Engagement)

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2002 QUALITY AUDIT:
The Final Word

In December 2007, the University provided AUQA with its final, comprehensive response to each of the nineteen recommendations made by AUQA’s audit panel during the 2002 quality audit. Our response to each of the recommendations includes reference to relevant extracts from the University’s performance portfolio and AUQA’s audit report, a synopsis of how the University has responded to AUQA’s recommendation, and a brief assessment of the effect on outcomes.

AUQA will consider our final report over the coming months and has indicated that they will be testing our claims against a number of the recommendations as part of the process for ‘closing the loop’ on the 2002 audit.

You can read our final word on the 2002 quality audit at the following address:

Published each quarter by the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Engagement), ACU NATIONAL QUALITY NEWS is your ready source of information on the things that you need to know about ‘quality’ and the University’s next quality audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).
NEW VICE CHANCELLOR WELCOMES QUALITY AUDIT

Not everyone would agree that an audit is a good thing. But, as your incoming Vice-Chancellor, I welcome the forthcoming AUQA quality audit (set for August this year) as a timely opportunity to obtain an external assessment of our strengths and weaknesses in the two important thematic areas of ‘community engagement’ and ‘learning outcomes’.

The results from AUQA’s 2008 quality audit will, I’m sure, assist the University to pause for reflection and then move forward into action, where action is needed. The audit will help us also to identify our areas of strength, to acknowledge those areas where we have made some headway, and in pinpointing areas in need of further attention.

One of the audit’s primary purposes is to affirm, and help us improve upon, the quality of the educational experience (and the associated lifelong benefits) that we offer to our students. On this note, I would encourage all staff to take an active interest in the upcoming quality audit and urge everyone to keep abreast of the University’s preparations in this area.

Professor Greg Craven
Vice-Chancellor

2008 QUALITY AUDIT: Five months to go!

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) has confirmed that the ACU National quality audit will be undertaken during the week beginning 11 August 2008 - less than five months away. The audit itself will take place over a number of days and a sample of staff from across the University will have the opportunity to speak with the audit panel.

The University anticipates that the panel will spend most of its time on the North Sydney campus but expects that one or more of our other campuses will host the audit panel at some time during the visit.

For more information:

AUQA AUDIT PANEL NAMED

The audit panel for our 2008 quality audit has been established by AUQA. The audit panel will be chaired by Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning from Charles Darwin University. Other panel members include:

Dr Mark Hay
Audit Director
Australian Universities Quality Agency Professor

Professor Luanna Meyer
Professor of Education (Research)
Victoria University of Wellington NZ

Ms Kate Castine
Member of Council
The University of Adelaide

Professor Barbara van Ernst
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community Engagement)
Swinburne University of Technology

Follow the link below for a short biography and photograph of each panel member:
http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/panel/?section=uni&id=110
DRAFT SUBMISSION GOES UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

In May this year, the University is required to submit its ‘Performance Portfolio’ to AUQA. The ‘Performance Portfolio’ will be the primary source upon which AUQA will base its findings. It will present our own assessment of our standing with respect to both ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘community engagement’ (which are the two audit themes) and flag where we are achieving good results and where we are currently focussing our improvement efforts.

The University finalised a draft of the ‘Performance Portfolio’ just prior to Christmas and sought an external review of its strengths and weaknesses. The review was undertaken by Emeritus Professor Phil Meade who was formerly Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Otago and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality) at Griffith University. Professor Mead has also been an AUQA auditor for some years.

Professor Meade made a number of recommendations to improve our Performance Portfolio and these are being progressively incorporated into our final portfolio submission. It is expected that copies of the final document will be available for staff in hard copy and electronically via the web in late May.

ACADEMIC BOARD DOES SOME REFLECTION

Consistent with the University’s approach to managing quality and achieving continuous improvement, Academic Board recently undertook a self-review to assess the extent of its own effectiveness. The review, which was undertaken over the December/January period, asked members via survey whether they thought that the Board was effectively addressing its terms of reference. Members were also asked about various organisational aspects of the Board’s activities.

A report presented to the February 2008 meeting of the Board found that members were generally very positive in assessing the Board’s effectiveness despite a low level of uncertainty and/or concern being expressed about the extent to which the Board was effective in dealing with research and research training, and community engagement.

BENCHMARKING PILOT: Community Engagement

The University is increasingly looking at ‘benchmarking’ as a tool for achieving improvement. Benchmarking provides us with a means to identify good practices in partner organisations so that we may learn, then adapt and improve our practices based on the experience of our benchmarking partners.

We are currently participating in a pilot benchmarking project under the auspices of the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) aimed at establishing data collection and survey tools in relation to community engagement. If successful, the University will have access to data that will allow us to assess our standing among Australian universities in areas that are central to community engagement.

In this second round of quality audits, AUQA has also flagged its interest in examining the extent to which universities are using benchmarking to achieve improvement. This development, coupled with our nomination of ‘community engagement’ as an audit theme, means that this project is likely to get some prominence in our ‘Performance Portfolio’ documentation.

For more information: http://www.aucea.net.au
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY: WHERE WE STAND

Results from the 2007 Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) were released late last year by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). The crux of the survey is based around six scales of student engagement:

- Academic Challenge – comprising 10 items;
- Active Learning – comprising 7 items;
- Student and Staff Interactions – comprising 6 items;
- Enriching Educational Experiences – comprising 12 items;
- Supportive Learning Environment – comprising 6 items;
- Work Integrated Learning – comprising 5 items.

The report prepared for the University indicated that our students had assessed us more highly in three of the scales (Active Learning, Enriching Educational Experiences and Work Integrated Learning) when compared with their counterparts in other participating Australian higher education institutions. There was no significant difference in response detected in the other three scales.

For more information: http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse/

QUALITY RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The Office of Planning and Quality continues to update the quality-related information that is available on the University’s website. Check it out at:

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

As part of our preparations for the next AUQA quality audit, we are aiming to engage, inform and educate everyone in the University community about quality and our response to the AUQA audit. We want people to understand and appreciate the ways in which we foster quality and continuous improvement and work together to achieve the University’s teaching and research goals.

Please let us know if you have any comments or questions.

See our contact details below.

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