

## 5 Academic review



### AUQA audit

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), the national agency that promotes, audits and reports on quality assurance in Australian higher education, reviewed the University for the second time, the first having been in 2002. This Cycle 2 quality audit looked at the areas of Learning Outcomes and Community Engagement.

The University submitted its Performance Portfolio to AUQA in May and its responses to 25 specific questions in July.

The Performance Portfolio was divided into three chapters:

- Overview and Outcomes since Cycle 1
- Learning Outcomes
- Community Engagement.

Chapters 2 and 3, relating to the two agreed themes, contained both achievements and areas for improvement.

The audit panel of five members was chaired by Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University. The panel visited three of the campuses (Brisbane, North Sydney and Melbourne), spoke to 309 members of the University community and reviewed 169 documents in addition to the Portfolio and Progress Report.

The AUQA report was received by the University in December 2008. Visit [www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/universities/#acu](http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/universities/#acu) to view the full report.

### Comments from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor commented on the AUQA audit report as follows.

*AUQA's report focuses on the two themes of Learning Outcomes and Community Engagement, which were nominated for audit by the University.*

*In summary, the audit report includes:*

- eight commendations (areas where we are doing well)
- nine affirmations (areas that need improvement, but which we are already working on)
- and seven recommendations (areas in which we need to make improvements).

*The University's focus on graduate attributes, our support for Indigenous students (and their academic outcomes), our library and academic support systems, and our commitment to enhancing our planning, quality and management systems were all positively recognised in the report. The diversity and effectiveness of our engagement partnerships with the community were also recognised, as were our efforts to develop and extend our understanding of, and approach to, community engagement.*

*In terms of improvement, AUQA has recommended, for example, that we move to resolve a number of existing workforce planning issues and establish regular staff satisfaction surveys. The audit report also recommends that we review our assessment policy and procedures and consider the issue of risk management when establishing community engagement partnerships.*



*Many staff and students were involved in the audit panel visits to Brisbane, Melbourne and North Sydney campuses and in the briefing sessions that preceded these visits. It is noteworthy that the report explicitly recognises the commitment, loyalty and dedication of staff as a key feature of the University.*

*The audit panel also noted the inclusive and participative nature in which we had prepared for the audit and were heartened by feedback from staff about the opportunity afforded by the audit to promote institution-wide discussions on key institutional activities.*

*The report is a positive endorsement of the University that gives us much to be proud of, several things that we need to improve, and an overall indication that we are doing many things well.*

#### **Suggestions for improvement**

The AUQA review made suggestions for improvement which included the following:

- In workforce planning the review found the University had not made serious strides since the 2002 audit and needed to give urgent attention to the "appropriate balance between permanent and sessional staff, replacing ageing staff and succession planning."
- "While the audit panel were left in no doubt as to the genuine connection of academic staff to the university mission and the embedding of research and scholarship into teaching and learning, the university failed to document this and needed to urgently implement a staff satisfaction survey."

#### **Institutional Assessment Framework (IAF) visit**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) team, led by Mr Colin Walters, Manager of the Higher Education Group, visited the University during the year to discuss areas including strategic direction, research strategy, partnerships, financial viability, student load and trends, equity issues, quality issues and staff profile.

#### **Entry programs**

##### **New entry scheme – the Early Achievers' Program**

The University this year introduced an early entry scheme for both school-leavers and non-school leavers, designed to recognise the wider achievements of applicants, including their community service and involvement and, in the case of non-school leavers, their employment experience.

School leavers who apply under the program are assessed on their demonstrated capacity for tertiary study before completion of their Year 12 studies, and non-school leavers are similarly assessed early, on their potential for university study.

Successful applicants receive an early provisional offer of a place in their course of choice. Further information about the early entry scheme is available at [www.acu.edu.au/earlyachievers](http://www.acu.edu.au/earlyachievers).

The success of this initiative was shown by the more than 1,000 applications in this, its first year.

#### **Other flexible entry programs**

- The UniAccess program offers possible entry pathways after reviewing the previous learning of applicants who do not have conventional entry qualifications.
- Mid-year entry is a popular option for undergraduate and postgraduate students, both local and international, and is available in an increasing number of courses.

**"The message that service is a core part of a student's identity and of a university education resonates strongly with students"**

Professor Greg Craven,  
Vice-Chancellor

Nursing teaching and research at the University benefits from many partnerships with Catholic health providers and joint research centres.



## New MOUs and partnerships

- A new Memorandum of Understanding was established between the University's Brisbane Campus and the Brisbane College of Theology (BCT) for collaboration in research, which will promote scholarship and research in theology and related fields and will provide students from both institutions with full borrowing rights for books and access to electronic resources in both collections.
- An endorsement was made by the Queensland bishops and the Senate of Australian Catholic University to work towards the integration of St Paul's Theological College with the University's School of Theology in Queensland by January 2009.
- New MOUs were established with partners of the new Clemente Australia program at the Ballarat Campus: ACU National, the University of Ballarat, the City of Ballarat, Ballarat City Library, Centacare and the Smith Family.
- The Memorandum of Understanding with RSL LifeCare was renewed in April 2008 for a further five-year period, with Professor Tracey McDonald in the Chair of Ageing funded by RSL LifeCare.
- The Memorandum of Understanding for the Plunkett Centre with St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney was renewed in December 2007 for a further five-year period.
- A successful partnership was established with Catholic Health Australia to deliver the Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture at multiple locations.
- Professor Linda Worrall-Carter was re-appointed for a second year as Professor of Nursing Research and Director of the Centre for Nursing Research at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne.

- A partnership was established between ACU National and various Catholic Education Offices, which obtained funds from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for a pilot scheme in the Northern Territory and Western Australia for a project, Leading Aligned Numeracy Development (LAND), designed to improve numeracy achievement in disadvantaged communities.

### Amalgamations

- The schools of Business and Informatics in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland were amalgamated to form the National School of Business, following an external review of the programs in these areas.
- The schools of Exercise (NSW) and Exercise (Vic) were also joined to form a new National School of Exercise, as part of the recommendations of a 2007 review of the School.

## New places and courses

### New places

(equivalent of full-time student load)

#### Early Childhood Education

Brisbane Campus	20
Melbourne Campus	15
Strathfield Campus	25

#### Nursing

Melbourne Campus	55
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#### Nursing/Paramedicine

Brisbane Campus	30
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### New courses and course reviews

- There was an internal review of the Bachelor of Nursing program and the Master of Nursing (Management) and Master of Nursing (Practice) courses: recommendations were pending as at 31 December 2008.
- The Faculty of Education's proposals, passed by the Academic Board, included the review of the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) and related courses for the collaboration with the Catholic Teachers' College in Baucau, East Timor.
- New units were offered, including Reasoning and Communications and Applied Business Information, for the new Bachelor of Business Information Systems degree, designed during 2008 for 2009 (double degrees of Arts/Business and Business/Business Information will also continue).
- A new Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine was introduced at the Ballarat Campus.
- New undergraduate degree courses in Midwifery and Paramedicine were approved across other campuses, to commence in 2009.
- New Master of Clinical Nursing and Master of Nursing (Practice Enquiry) degrees were approved by the Faculty Board for introduction in 2009.
- A new Master of Psychology (Clinical) course was approved for the Brisbane Campus from 2009; staff were appointed in 2008 in preparation for this development.
- A Diploma of Exercise Science was introduced.
- The Human Resource Management Major offered in the Bachelor of Business was accredited by the Australian Human Resources Institute for three years from August 2008.
- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences commenced a Postgraduate Certificate in Human Services for the professional development of the staff of Caritas Australia, and a Graduate Certificate in Arts (Applied Ethics), offered to the staff of St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney (SVMHS).