



## ACADEMIC QUALITY POLICY

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<b>Custodian title &amp; e-mail address:</b>	Director, Academic Quality and Standards Unit (AQS) <a href="mailto:quality@uow.edu.au">quality@uow.edu.au</a>		
<b>Author:</b>	Manager, Academic Quality & Policy Academic Quality and Standards Unit (AQS)		
<b>Responsible Division &amp; Unit:</b>	Academic Quality and Standards Unit Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)		
<b>Supporting documents, procedures &amp; forms:</b>	<a href="#">Course and Subject Approval Procedures – New Offerings and Discontinuations</a> <a href="#">Course and Subject Approval Procedures – Amendments to Existing Courses</a> <a href="#">Course Design Procedures</a> <a href="#">Course Policy</a> <a href="#">Course Review Procedures</a> <a href="#">Conferrals and Issuance Policy</a> <a href="#">Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures</a> <a href="#">Guide to External Referencing</a> <a href="#">Procedure for Managing Comparative Student Performance</a> <a href="#">Risk Management Policy</a> <a href="#">Standards and Quality Framework for Learning and Teaching at UOW</a> <a href="#">University of Wollongong (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2015</a> <a href="#">UOW Education Evaluation Strategy</a> <a href="#">UOW Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020</a>		
<b>Relevant Legislation &amp; External Documents:</b>	<a href="#">TEQSA Act, 2011</a> <a href="#">Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards), 2015</a>		
<b>Audience:</b>	Public		

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## 1 Purpose of Policy

1. As a self-accrediting institution registered under the TEQSA Act, 2011, the University has an obligation to ensure that it continues to demonstrate high academic standards in learning and teaching programs and services and in the conduct of its research and research training.
2. This policy aims to provide a robust and efficient system to support ongoing academic quality and continuous improvement of academic processes and outcomes at the University. It sets out, in the context of the University's academic quality management structure, the requirements for course and academic unit reviews.
3. Related procedures for the conduct of course and academic unit reviews are set out in the Course Review Procedures and the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures respectively.

## 2 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Academic Unit	Any school, discipline group, institute, facility or centre conducting academic activities at the University.
Course	As defined in the Coursework Rules
DVC(E)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
FEC	Faculty Education Committee
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
Learning outcomes	Statements of the knowledge, understandings, and skills students are expected to achieve as a result of engaging with the content of the subject
Subject	As under the Coursework Rules
TEQSA Act	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act, 2011 (Commonwealth).
University	University of Wollongong

## 3 Application & Scope

1. This policy applies to all reviews of academic activities carried out by the University both onshore and offshore.

## 4 Academic Quality Management at the University

### Key Role of Strategic Planning and Academic Quality

1. The University's status as a registered higher education provider is subject to its compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015, (detailing "the matters

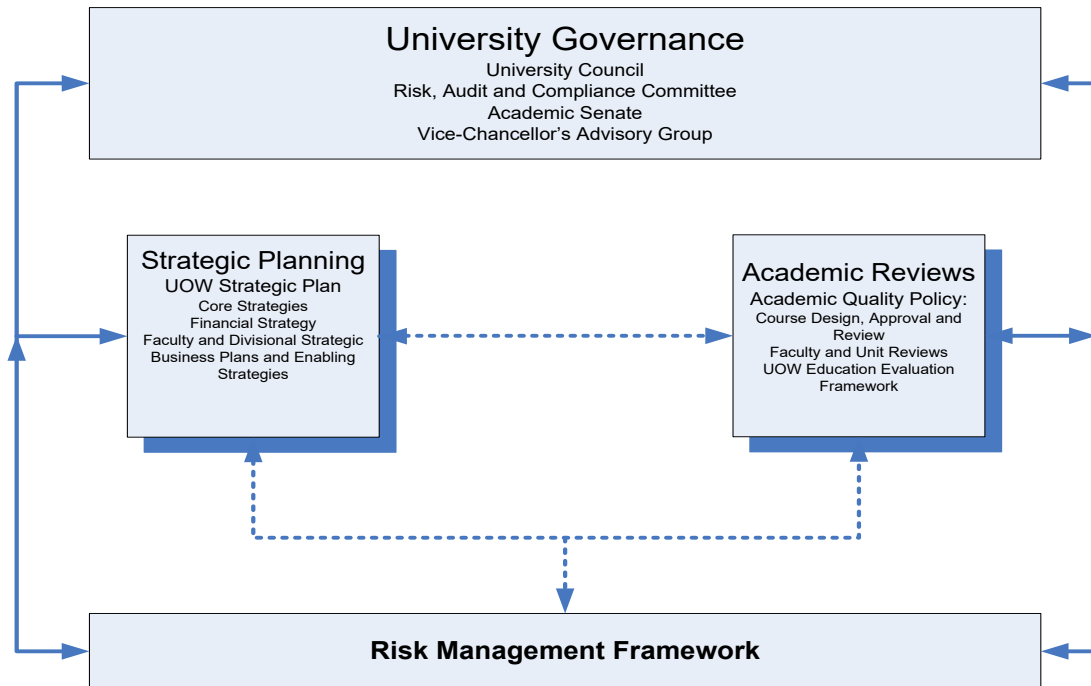


that a higher education provider would ordinarily be expected to address in the course of understanding and monitoring its higher education activities and managing any associated risks. Each standard represents an underlying area of risk to be managed.” (Higher Education Standards Framework, 2015, p.5).

2. Specifically, the Threshold Standards requires that:
  - a. 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 to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements... (Standard 5.3(7))
  - b. The provider is able to demonstrate, and the corporate governing body assures itself, that the provider is operating effectively and sustainably, including... (that) risks to higher education operations have been identified and material risks are being managed and mitigated effectively. (Standard 6.1(e)).
3. To support quality enhancement with the Threshold Standards, the University has developed a Standard and Quality Framework for Learning and Teaching at the University.
4. Academic quality is primarily managed at the University through two interconnected sets of processes (depicted in Figure 1 below):
  - a. Strategic planning and reporting processes under which the University sets institutional goals and monitors performance in achieving those goals.
  - b. The processes set out in this policy to enhance the quality of:
    - i. the course (section 6),
    - ii. teaching and assessment (section 7),
    - iii. the student learning experience (section 8), and
    - iv. faculties and schools (section 9).
5. The goals, objectives and strategies articulated in University plans and policies provide the essential reference points for the design, approval and review of courses, review of academic units and the enhancement of the student educational experience. The outcomes of those processes in turn help to shape the development of future goals and objectives and the strategies for their achievement.



**Figure 1: Academic Quality Management at the University**



6. Within this framework, externally-developed quality systems (e.g. ISO 9001, business excellence frameworks) are also used, as appropriate, as mechanisms for enhancing quality in specific areas or units within the University.

### The University Quality Cycle

7. The strategic planning and academic review processes outlined in section 4.1 both apply the University's defined cyclical quality enhancement process – Plan, Act, Review, Improve (PARI) – to ensure that the University's objectives and standards are tested and improved. This cycle is also applied to other processes and activities undertaken at the University.



**Figure 2: University Quality Enhancement Cycle**



PLAN ... identify and define what we want to achieve and develop an approach for achieving those goals

ACT ... identify and schedule actions for achieving our goals and implement those strategies

REVIEW ... monitor how we are progressing towards achieving our goals

IMPROVE ... identify changes that need to be made so that we can better meet our goals and, possibly, reconsider the appropriateness of those goals

## Risk management

8. The strategic planning and academic review processes are supported by university-wide strategic and operational risk assessments, risk management planning and other independent reviews and monitoring activities in relation of processes conducted by the University in accordance with its Risk Management Policy and in line with its obligations as a provider subject to the Threshold Standards.
9. TEQSA maintains a risk assessment of the University and all other providers in accordance with the TEQSA Risk Assessment Framework, which is used as a key reference point as part of the University's provider re-registration process.
10. Outcomes of University risk assessment and risk management activities are used as a reference to:
  - a. set priorities and guide the development of strategies to ensure achievement of the University's goals; and
  - b. evaluate performance in working towards their achievement.

## Monitoring

11. The strategic planning and academic review processes are monitored at an institutional level through the University's Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework.
12. Responsibility for monitoring rests with the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group, Academic Senate, the Risk Audit and Compliance Committee of University Council and the University Council.

## 5 Academic Quality Enhancement Principles

### Purpose

1. Academic quality enhancement is the ultimate goal of the University's risk and quality management activities in connection with teaching and learning. It brings together assurance and risk management. Academic quality enhancement should:
  - a. provide opportunities to reflect on achievements against goals and stated outcomes;
  - b. identify strengths to be built on and opportunities for improvement;
  - c. include external reference points; and



- d. strengthen engagement by staff, students and other relevant stakeholders with the PARI process.

## Process

2. An academic quality enhancement process should include:
  - a. a clear statement of the scope of and terms of reference for any unit, process or activity under review (including clear links to relevant goals, objectives and strategies);
  - b. clearly defined responsibilities for initiation and carriage;
  - c. a clear and realistic timeframe;
  - d. reference to stakeholder feedback (e.g. from students, staff, external community);
  - e. reference to institutional, faculty and/or unit performance indicators and relevant data;
  - f. reference to relevant external reference points including standards or benchmarks;
  - g. external input into major reviews; and
  - h. appropriate approval, reporting, communication and implementation of the outcomes of the review.
3. External referencing activities, including benchmarking and external peer review of assessment standards, with appropriate partners, at a national or international level, enables the University to compare and evaluate its performance and, in so doing, monitor standards, compare good practice and make quality improvements.
4. External referencing projects undertaken by Faculties and Units of the University will:
  - a. support the University's mission, goals and strategic priorities;
  - b. be characterised by a commitment to: learning from good practice; implementing potential improvements arising from benchmarking findings; and sharing of good practices including after projects are completed;
  - c. be characterised by mutuality: the expectations of the proposed benchmarking activity need to be established prior to commencement of that activity, with a view to establishing mutual interest and benefits for all parties;
  - d. be balanced in terms of the value received compared to costs involved in undertaking the projects; and
  - e. have the approval of the relevant Executive Dean or Director.
5. External referencing projects and activities should be carried out in accordance with the Guide to Benchmarking and the External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment Standards Procedures.

## 6 Course Design, Approval and Review

1. The process for design, approval and review courses at the University is determined in accordance with the Course Policy Framework, comprising:
  - a. the [Course Policy](#), outlining the overarching framework for managing course design, development and review;



- b. the [Course Design Procedures](#), providing direction and guidance on the design of courses, including direction on the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework;
- c. the [Course and Subject Approval Procedures – New Offerings and Discontinuations](#), providing direction on the process for submission and approval of new courses and significant amendments to existing courses;
- d. the [Course and Subject Approval Procedures – Amendments to Existing Courses](#), providing direction on the process for submission and approval of less significant amendments to existing courses;
- e. the [Course Review Procedures](#), providing for the review and re-approval of existing courses on a periodic basis against a set of evaluation criteria, including external reference points, designed to maintain and enhance course quality; and
- f. the [Conferrals and Issuance Policy](#), providing for the process of conferring awards on successful completion of courses offered by the University.

## 7 Teaching and Assessment Quality

1. The Teaching and Assessment Policy Suite (TAPS) effectively supports teaching and assessment quality measures. TAPS comprises:
  - a. the Teaching and Assessment: Code of Practice – Teaching, providing for statements of roles and responsibilities for all staff involved in teaching and assessment;
  - b. the Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback Policy, providing for quality assurance mechanisms for the design, delivery, mark declaration and review phases of the subject delivery lifecycle; and
  - c. the Teaching and Assessment: Subject Delivery Policy, providing direction and guidance on subject delivery.
2. Course quality is supported by the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes at the course, major study and subject level.
3. TAPS includes provisions for external peer review of assessment standards within selected units of study, which is aimed at ensuring effective assessment design towards appropriate achievement standards and the attainment of course learning outcomes.
4. Ongoing quality enhancement of assessment is carried out at the point of assessment design, delivery, declaration of marks and review as part of the Assessment Quality Cycle.
5. The University systematically collects and reports on student performance data across all teaching locations in accordance with the Procedure for Monitoring Comparative Student Outcomes. In addition, the University monitors and reports on student progression, attrition and completion rates, across student cohorts and delivery locations and against external reference points.
6. Academic quality is also maintained and enhanced for collaborative delivery arrangements through the Collaborative Delivery of a UOW Course Policy and associated procedures and the Joint and Dual Award Policy.





## 8 Student Feedback and Evaluation

1. Collecting and responding to student feedback and evaluation is an important means of enhancing the quality of learning and teaching and the student experience.
2. Methods of obtaining student feedback and evaluation may be formal or informal, structured or unstructured. Methods include surveys, focus groups, student consultations and student participation in reviews.
3. The University gathers and reports on student feedback and evaluation using ethical and systematic processes and uses such feedback, in conjunction with other sources of data, to enhance quality and inform education-related decision making.
4. Surveys are used to obtain student input a range of activities, services and facilities, including teaching, subjects and courses. Both internal and external evaluation instruments are used at the University.
5. Surveys serve both formative and summative purposes. Surveys inform the continual improvement of teaching and the curriculum and also provide summative evidence for staff promotion, probation and awards, and for internal and external quality assurance reporting requirements.
6. Instruments used at the University include:
  - a. the Subject Evaluation Survey;
  - b. the Teacher Evaluation Survey; and
  - c. the Student Experience Questionnaire.
7. Instruments used at a national/sector level include:
  - a. the Student Experience Survey;
  - b. the Course Experience Questionnaire;
  - c. the Graduate Outcomes Survey; and
  - d. the International Student Barometer.
8. Evaluations may be delivered concurrently, where the system of delivery will support this, however results will be reported separately and disseminated as per provisions 8.10 - 8.12 and 8.14 - 8.16.

### Evaluation of Teaching

9. Individual teachers are responsible for requesting a formal evaluation of their teaching in at least one subject in each year.
10. The results of the Teacher Evaluations will remain confidential to the academic staff member whose teaching is being evaluated and their immediate supervisor.
11. Teacher Evaluations, combined with other sources of information gained through peer and self-evaluation, will inform the staff development interview. In accordance with the [University of Wollongong \(Academic Staff\) Enterprise Agreement 2019](#), Teacher Evaluations cannot be used for performance management.
12. Results of Teacher Evaluations may be aggregated across the Faculty and distributed to the Faculty Executive for monitoring, review and improvement purposes.



## Evaluation of Subjects

13. Faculties are responsible for developing an appropriate schedule for the evaluation of subjects to ensure that surveys are conducted once a year for each subject, in at least one subject delivery instance.
14. The results of the Subject Evaluations will be made available to the School or unit, which owns the subject, to support subject monitoring, review and improvement activities undertaken by the school or unit.
15. Aggregated outcomes of Subject Evaluation may be reported for institutional monitoring, review, improvement and quality assurance activities.
16. Where subjects are delivered in collaboration with a partner institution, the results of any subject evaluation will be communicated back to both the faculty designated staff of the University (e.g. Subject Coordinator, Head of School, Executive Dean) and appropriate representatives of the partner institution (e.g. Lecturer, Program Director, Dean), and used to inform the annual review of the collaborative delivery arrangement.

## Student Experience Questionnaire

17. The Student Experience Questionnaire is administered on an annual basis to all students studying at an onshore campus and is designed to obtain feedback from students on the quality of their overall educational experience.
18. Results of the Subject Evaluation Survey and the Student Experience Survey will be aggregated at a discipline/school/faculty level and will be made available to students via an online portal.

## Evaluation Records

19. Information derived from all evaluation instruments will be stored in the central data warehouse, and will be analysed and considered as part of quality enhancement activities in order to maintain and enhance academic quality. An annual Student Evaluation Report will be prepared for this purpose for consideration by Academic Senate.

## 9 Faculty and School Reviews

1. Faculty and School planning and review are critical to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the University Strategic Plan. This section sets out the processes for:
  - a. regular reviews of Schools as the chief operative unit within Faculties;
  - b. extraordinary reviews of Faculties and of Academic Units for strategic or performance reasons;
  - c. and the conduct and reporting on those reviews.
2. Faculty and School reviews are supported by the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures.

## School Reviews

3. A review of School performance against goals occurs on a five year rolling basis. School performance will be assessed against key metrics that support the showcasing of good practice and embedding of continuous improvement.



4. The seven key metrics, which are linked to the core goal areas, are focused on:
  - a. performance and proposed future directions in learning and teaching;
  - b. performance and proposed future directions research and research training;
  - c. performance and proposed future directions related to internationalisation;
  - d. performance and proposed future directions related to partnerships and community engagement;
  - e. financial performance and financial sustainability;
  - f. performance against strategy and strategic alignment; and
  - g. approach to workforce management.
5. A School Review Schedule will be determined by the Vice Chancellor in consultation with Senior Executive and Executive Deans, and in scheduling review, will take account of Schools experiencing:
  - a. Performance challenges (based on School Performance Criteria);
  - b. External environmental changes requiring a reconsideration of strategic direction;
  - c. A change-over of Head of School; or
  - d. other academic review commitments of the School and/or Faculty, including course reviews and external accreditation processes.
6. School Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures.

#### **School Review Panel Membership:**

7. The School Review Panel shall be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and comprise:
  - a. one to two senior external expert(s) in a related field on advice from the Executive Dean;
  - b. a Head of School (from outside the School/unit under review);
  - c. a senior academic (from outside the School/unit under review); and
  - d. other members as appropriate (e.g. a Faculty Executive Manager, Faculty Management Accountant or School Manager).
8. A chair will be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor from among the members of the review panel.

#### **Reporting of School Reviews**

9. Upon completion of the School Review, a review report shall be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor, who shall refer the outcomes to the School for a response in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures. The response shall include:
  - a. a plan for action to address issues raised in the review report; or
  - b. reasons why no further action is required in response to issues raised.



10. The Vice-Chancellor shall assess the response and provide a commentary (which may include advice on directions and structure).
11. In accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures, the report on the review outcomes, the commentary and the response from the School shall be forwarded, as appropriate, to the Faculty Executive Committee for noting and to the Academic Senate and University Council for noting and, where required, approval of the recommendations.
12. The School shall implement the approved recommendations and submit a specific implementation/improvement report, as part of their next School Planning and Review Report, and address any outstanding issues thereafter via that annual reporting process.

### **Ad Hoc Faculty or Academic Unit Reviews**

13. Where serious strategic or performance issues in a Faculty or in an Academic Unit within the Faculty are identified by the senior executive through any faculty monitoring and review process, the Vice-Chancellor may, at the request of the relevant member(s) of the senior executive, ask the Executive Dean to make a written submission to the Vice-Chancellor which responds to the issues identified by the Vice Chancellor and recommends one of the following options:
  - a. No further action on the basis that the issues lack substance or have otherwise been dealt with; or
  - b. Initiation of an unscheduled course review (outside the normal five-year cycle) in accordance with the Course Review Procedures; or
  - c. Initiation of an unscheduled school review (outside the normal five-year cycle) in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures; or
  - d. Initiation by the Vice-Chancellor of a centrally-administered, independent review of the Faculty or of an Academic Unit in the Faculty in accordance with section 9.16 below.
14. Serious issues which may lead to a request for a written response from the Executive Dean under section 9.13 include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Significant performance issues, including failure to meet planning targets;
  - b. Misalignment of the Faculty with the University's Strategic Goals;
  - c. External environmental changes requiring reconsideration of strategic direction;
  - d. Evidence of a decline in academic standards;
  - e. Failure to meet student number targets; and
  - f. Significant staff recruitment and/or management issues.
15. After reviewing the Executive Dean's submission and consulting with other senior executives, the Vice Chancellor shall determine an appropriate course of action, which may include any of the options set out in section 9.13.

### **Initiation of Ad hoc Reviews by Vice-Chancellor**

16. The Vice-Chancellor may initiate an independent, centrally-administered review of a Faculty or Academic Unit either in response to:



- a. the process arising from a request by a member of the senior executive under sections 9.13 above; or
- b. at any other time, in response to faculty-specific issues listed in section 9.14 or wider environmental or University planning issues, including but not limited to:
  - i. Major changes in strategic direction, disciplinary mix, academic focus or leadership,
  - ii. Significant issues in performance identified by the Executive Dean or Senior Executive outside the formal reporting cycles,
  - iii. Significant strategic recruitment issues, and
  - iv. Significant issues in performance identified in other reviews (e.g. course reviews, faculty-administered reviews).

### **Review Scope and Focus**

17. Ad Hoc Reviews will assess performance against the University Strategic goals and objectives and aligned faculty objectives as they apply at the time of the review.

### **Conduct of Ad hoc Faculty Reviews**

18. Where an ad hoc review of a Faculty is initiated, the Vice-Chancellor shall, after consultation with the Executive Dean and relevant members of the senior executive, advise the Faculty and commence the review in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures.

### **Faculty Review Panel Membership:**

19. The Faculty Review Panel shall be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and comprise:
  - a. a Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice Chancellor;
  - b. the Chair or Deputy Chair of Senate;
  - c. an Executive Dean from outside the Faculty under review;
  - d. one to two senior experts in related field(s) external to the University, on advice from the Executive Dean; and
  - e. other members as deemed appropriate (e.g. Chief Financial Officer or Director Human Resources).
20. A chair will be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor from among the members of the review panel.

### **Ad Hoc Review Panel Terms of Reference:**

21. The Ad Hoc Review Panel will:
  - a. Review the Faculty's performance against the University's Goals and Objectives (and aligned faculty objectives) in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures, with particular reference to:
    - i. the issue(s) triggering the review;
    - ii. information and data provided to or requested by the Committee;



- iii. stakeholder feedback (e.g. from students, staff, external community); and
  - iv. relevant external standards and benchmarks.
- b. Provide a report on the review that includes recommendations for improvements and a plan for further action.

## Reporting of Ad Hoc Reviews

22. Upon completion of the Faculty review, the review report shall be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor, who shall refer the outcomes to the Faculty for a response in accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures. The response shall include:
  - a. a plan for action to address issues raised in the review report; or
  - b. reasons why no further action is required in response to issues raised.
23. The Vice-Chancellor shall assess the response and provide a commentary (which may include advice on directions and structure).
24. In accordance with the Faculty and Academic Unit Review Procedures, the report on the review outcomes, the commentary and the response from the faculty shall be forwarded, as appropriate, to the Faculty Executive Committee for noting and to the Academic Senate and University Council for noting and, where required, approval of the recommendations.
25. The Faculty shall implement the approved recommendations and submit a specific implementation/improvement report, as part of their next Faculty Planning and Review Report, and address any outstanding issues thereafter via that annual reporting process.

## 10 Roles & Responsibilities

### Management

1. The Vice-Chancellor has executive oversight of faculty and school reviews.
2. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) has executive oversight of the implementation of sections 4-8 of this Policy, and for the maintenance and enhancement of academic quality at the University.
3. Each Faculty Executive Dean is responsible for:
  - a. Ensuring that faculty planning and review processes are conducted by appropriate staff in accordance with the Planning and Reporting Framework;
  - b. Ensuring that faculty committees are in place and operating as required to contribute to the review processes set out in section 9 above; and
  - c. Overseeing course reviews in accordance with the Course Review Procedures.

### Committees

4. The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group, the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee, Academic Senate and the University Council have general oversight of the strategic planning and academic quality processes.



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5. Strategic Course Development Committee, Quality Assurance Review Group and Academic Senate are responsible for the review and approval of course proposals.
6. Academic Senate is responsible for the periodic re-approval of courses following course review.
7. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee has general oversight over the maintenance and enhancement of academic quality and standards in learning and teaching at the University.
8. The roles of other Faculty committees are set out, as appropriate, in the Faculty Academic Governance Policy.

## **Units**

9. Academic Quality and Standards Unit has operational responsibility for assuring and enhancing academic quality at the University.
10. Business Assurance and Improvement Division has operational responsibility for supporting cyclical school reviews.
11. Strategic Planning Unit has operational responsibility for annual reporting of performance against the strategic goals.



## 11 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	1 January 2009	University Council	First Version
2	5 February 2009	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Migrated to UOW Policy Template as per Policy Directory Refresh
3	13 July 2009	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Minor amendments to: rename the Curriculum Review and Development Committee to become the External Curriculum Appraisal Committee rename the Curriculum Review Group to Faculty Curriculum Review Group correct references to the Course Approval Guidelines and include reference to Curriculum Review Guidelines correction of DVC(A&I) to DVC(A) other minor typographical changes
4	11 June 2010	University Council	Amendments to section 8.4, 8.25 and 8.35 consequential upon enactment of the Standard on Courses
5	4 March 2011	N/A	Updated references from Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) to Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor
6	19 Dec 2012	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Updated references from DVC(E) to DVC(A)
7	7 June 2013	University Council	Update by removing all reference to the Faculty Advisory Committee (now an optional committee managed under the Faculty Academic Governance Policy) and to renumber all sections accordingly.
8	8 December 2017	University Council	Major review following instigation of an Academic Quality and Standards Unit; the establishment of a Quality and Standards Framework for Learning and Teaching at UOW; the reintroduction of cyclical school reviews; and changes to subject and teacher





			evaluations.
9	1 January 2020 (Approved 9 June 2020)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)	Administrative amendments to reflect the rescission of General Course Rules replaced by Coursework Rules.
10	6 October 2020	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)	Administrative amendments to reflect update to Academic EBA and updated references from DVC (A) to DVC (E).