

Planning and Budget Committee
Report from the Quality Assurance and Accountability Committee
(formerly Quality Improvement Committee)

Purpose

This paper reports on Meeting 1/2003 of the Quality Assurance and Accountability Committee held on 14 February 2003 and makes a **recommendation** on the addition of item 5. regarding the role of the Committee in the annual review of Ensuring Accountability (**Appendix A**).

Membership

Members discussed the issue of student representation on the Committee and agreed that the following two ex-officio positions be created:

- President, Melbourne University Student Union Inc (or nominee)
- President, University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association (or nominee)

This change to the membership is reflected in the revised terms of reference at Appendix A.

Role and responsibilities of the Committee

The Chair explained that he does not want the University to undertake any extra activities in preparation for or during the AUQA audit that are not already detailed in Ensuring Accountability.

He advised members that the role of the Committee is to revise Ensuring Accountability on an annual basis and more regularly if gaps or inadequacies in the University's quality assurance processes are identified. The operational role of the Committee is to oversee the implementation of the accountability structure as outlined in Ensuring Accountability.

Members discussed the priorities for the Committee in 2003 and devised the following workplan:

- Develop tools and instruments to assist the University in implementing the accountability structure
- Develop evaluation and monitoring systems to ensure that quality process loops are being closed
- Address weaknesses in international benchmarking, particularly focussing on research and resource units, and undergraduate and postgraduate assessment standards

The issue of external input to departmental audits was raised and discussed and the Chair advised that the mechanism for a department wishing to seek external input is through the departmental audit process. It was agreed that external input in the 2003 departmental audits would be useful and visiting academics could be used for this purpose, as long as

they were given an honorarium for their work. Members agreed that the process for receiving external input to departmental audits should be in place by mid-2003.

Quality Self-Assessments

The Chair led a detailed discussion on the self-assessment checklist and proforma, and the following issues were raised:

- possible difficulties in completing the self-assessment in the required timeframe
- resistance from departments not willing to complete the self-assessment
- introduction of quantifiable responses to the checklist
- provision of an example of a completed proforma to departments
- inclusion of a question at the end of the self-assessment asking departments to estimate how long it took to complete and the cost in terms of resources for comparison in future years
- change to the wording of activity, “Effective use of resources, including any cost-cutting initiatives”.

In light of that discussion, members agreed that the following changes should be made to the checklist:

- include two columns requiring departments to rate the relative importance of an activity and their performance against that activity, on a scale of 1-5
- change instructions to require departments to respond to all 69 activities in the checklist in this way and then choose 6 activities to address in greater detail in the self-assessment pro-forma– 3 areas of achievement and 3 priorities for improvement for each department
- state clearly in the preamble that the self-assessment documentation could be viewed by AUQA during the audit and departments should be aware that AUQA may ask detailed questions about any one of the 69 activities

Members also agreed that Heads of Departments should be encouraged to involve their staff in completing the checklist and proforma.

Ms Martin agreed to revise the checklist and proforma distribute to Deans and Heads of Department as soon as possible. It was suggested that the Hot Topics Issues Forum, organised by Ms P Waller, could be used for this purpose.

Outline for AUQA portfolio submission

Members discussed the outline for the AUQA portfolio submission, prepared by Ms Martin and debated whether such a document was necessary, in light of the publication, Ensuring Accountability, which should contain all the references to all the information required by AUQA.

It was noted that the purpose of the outline is to provide AUQA with a map of University processes and documentation, highlighting the strengths of the University in particular.

The amount of detail included under each heading in the outline was discussed and it was that little if any description should be provided under the headings, replaced with dot points and references to relevant websites.

Ms Martin and Mr Marshman will meet to revise the outline for presentation to the next meeting of the Committee.

Renaming of the Committee

In the last report to Planning Budget Committee, it was stated that the Committee would be renamed the Ensuring Accountability Committee. Subsequent to the meeting it was decided to amend this to the Quality Assurance and Accountability Committee.

Recommendation

That Planning and Budget Committee endorse the new terms of reference and addition of student representation to the Committee.

Professor A Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor
Chair, Quality Assurance and Accountability Committee

21 February 2003

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

1. The University's Accountability Structure, Ensuring Accountability, sets out the annual cycles of planning, performance reporting and quality assurance through which the University adheres to proper governance and management processes and discharges its external accountabilities. As part of Ensuring Accountability, internal quality assurance activities are managed in a manner that reduces to a minimum the need for additional ad hoc work to enable the University to satisfy external quality accountabilities.
2. The annual cycle of quality assurance is designed to validate the extent of progress towards the fulfilment of the University's mission and goals at University, Faculty, Department and Administration unit levels. Overall, the aim is to provide the Council, Vice-Chancellor, Deans, Heads of Departments and Senior Managers with systematic feedback on the performance of programs and to promote a culture of rigorous self-analysis and review from which continuous improvement initiatives are identified and implemented.
3. Within the University, there are many officers and bodies with responsibility for the annual cycle of quality assurance. The primary role of the Quality Assurance and Accountability Committee is to facilitate co-ordination of quality improvement and quality assurance activities among these officers and bodies, thereby ensuring excellent outcomes from any quality audit process without additional work or demands on staff.

MEMBERSHIP

Vice-Chancellor	(Professor Alan Gilbert)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Staff)	(Professor Kwong Lee Dow)
Officer of the Academic Board (nominated by the President)	(Professor Peter McPhee)
Senior Vice-Principal	(Mr Ian Marshman)
Vice-Principal (Information)	(Ms Helen Hayes)
Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar	(Ms Lin Martin)
Two Deans (nominated by the Deans)	(Professor Brian Caldwell) (Professor Stuart Macintyre) For 2003 — Professor Arie Freiberg
Three Members of Academic Staff (with experience as Heads of Departments)	(Professor James Angus) (Professor John Freebairn) (Professor Ken Ghiggino)
One Faculty General Manager (nominated by the Senior Vice-Principal)	(Ms Maddy McMaster)
President, Melbourne University Student Union (or nominee)	TBA
President, University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association (or nominee)	TBA

The Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar is both member and Executive Officer to the Committee.

The Committee will have the capacity to seek advice and to consult with people who have relevant expertise. For example, it is likely that the Committee will work with the Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, and the Director, University Planning, on some matters.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the development and implementation of the University's annual cycle of quality assurance and, through it, on the integration of continuous quality improvement processes with University planning so as to improve the quality of academic and administrative operations and to promote achievement of the University's Strategic and Operational Plans.
2. To monitor the development at all levels within the University of quality improvement and quality assurance measures based on national and international best practice and benchmarking activities consistent with the University's Strategic Plan.
3. To monitor the outcomes of quality assurance activities to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to improve the quality of academic and administrative operations.
4. To ensure effective and efficient interaction between those with quality assurance and quality improvement responsibilities within the University.
5. To review periodically the University's Accountability Structure, Ensuring Accountability, and provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor on any changes that might be desirable to strengthen performance of the University's internal and external accountability processes.

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