

Introduction of a Systematic Approach to Organisation Unit Reviews

At its Meeting 24/08 – 10 December 2008, the Vice-Chancellor's Committee discussed the revised paper prepared by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality), that proposed the introduction of a systematic approach to reviews of both academic and administrative organisational units.

The paper was first presented to the VCC meeting 12/08 – 9 July 2008 and following discussion the PVC(L&Q) undertook to revise the paper and bring it back to VCC at a later date. A report on the paper presented at the July VCC meeting was discussed at the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) meeting on 18 August 2008. Consequently, QEC endorsed the elements described in Appendix A and Appendix B for the Vice-Chancellor and President's approval.

The paper *Introduction of a Systematic Approach to Organisation Unit Reviews* (attached) presented at the December VCC meeting stated that currently, all academic programs are subject to a five-year review cycle and other components of the University such as faculties, schools, disciplines, divisions and branches are reviewed on a needs basis. The paper proposed that in order for the University's quality assurance process to be fully effective a regular cycle of academic and administrative units, in addition to the five-year review cycle of academic programs, should be introduced.

In order to facilitate such a structured approach to reviews of academic and administrative units, the paper stated that it was necessary to consider the differences between the structures, the roles and the responsibilities of academic and administrative units. A full outline of those considerations were provided in Appendices A and B to the paper.

After deliberations the VCC "*endorsed the proposal in principle, subject to revision taking into account issues around the terms of reference for reviews; workload at unit level in preparing for review; frequency; degree of detail; and the need for different structures for academic and administrative units, and possibly also research institutes*" (minutes records VCC meeting 10 December 2008).

Both Appendix A and Appendix B attached have been updated to reflect the changes requested by the VCC.

INTRODUCTION OF A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO ORGANISATION UNIT REVIEWS

At its Meeting 12/08 - 9 July 2008, the Vice-Chancellor's Committee (VCC) discussed the paper *Introduction of a Cycle of Organisation Unit Reviews* prepared by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) {PVC(L&Q)}, that proposed the introduction of a systematic approach to reviews of both academic and administrative organisational units. Following discussion the PVC(L&Q) undertook to revise the paper and bring it back to VCC at a later date.

1. Proposal

It is proposed that the University of Adelaide expand the conduct of reviews to provide a systematic approach to both academic and administrative organisational unit reviews in addition to degree programs.

2. Background

Review activities are an integral part of the University's approach to quality assurance. Currently, all academic programs are subject to a five-year review cycle and other components of the University such as faculties, schools, divisions, branches and disciplines are reviewed on a needs basis. This practice fails to satisfy the requirements of a total quality cycle.

In order for the University's quality assurance process to be fully effective there should be a systematic and structured approach to the review of all areas of University activity, including academic as well as administrative units, focusing on their contribution to and alignment with the University's Strategic Plan.

3. Considerations

In order to facilitate such a structured approach to reviews of academic and administrative units, it is necessary to consider the differences between the structures, the roles and the responsibilities of academic and administrative units. These differences will possibly impact on the nature and the focus of such reviews.

Consideration should also be given to any involvement by either academic and administrative units in accreditation processes or other forms of external review. In cases where accreditation or a review has occurred in recent years these should be accepted in lieu of any further review by the University unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Overall responsibility for the review process will rest with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Academic).

A report on the paper presented at the July VCC meeting was discussed at the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) meeting on 18 August 2008. Consequently, QEC endorsed a seven year cycle for academic unit reviews and a structure for review panels that would be agreed between the relevant Executive Dean and the PVC (L&Q). QEC also endorsed the view that

consideration be given to accepting accreditation or review by external organisations in place of academic reviews in order to avoid duplication of effort.

In the case of administrative or para-administrative units the Divisional Head has responsibility for determining the frequency, process and panel structure for reviews within their Divisions.

A full outline of these considerations is provided in Appendices A and B.

Recommendation: That the Vice-Chancellor Committee endorse the elements described in Appendix A and Appendix B for the Vice-Chancellor and President's approval.

PROFESSOR BIRGIT LOHMANN
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality)

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PROPOSED ELEMENTS TO UNDERPIN ACADEMIC UNIT REVIEWS

Unit of Review:

The **School**, being the focus of activity for a clearly identified and specific academic area, is to be considered as the focus for academic unit reviews; however, other units such as research centres and research institutes may be included in this process.

Responsibility:

Academic unit reviews will be overseen by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Quality) {PVC(L&Q)} and managed by the Quality and Reviews unit of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President (Academic)'s Office.

Frequency:

Each academic unit is to be reviewed **at least** once every seven years. An initial seven year schedule of reviews will be developed by the Head of School in consultation with the Executive Dean. The initial plan will be thereafter updated each year for the following seven years. **Where appropriate a School, Faculty or Executive Manager may request a review outside the cycle.**

The choice of academic units for review in any particular year will be negotiated between Executive Deans and the PVC (L&Q), taking into account: the performance of the unit, the prevailing strategic imperatives of the University and the intention that all units be reviewed at least once over the duration of the cycle. For academic units with accreditation requirements or that have undergone or will undergo any other form of external review, these will usually be accepted in lieu, with the aim of minimising duplication of effort.

Terms of Reference:

Reviews of academic units would focus on performance of the School, its organisational structure, the allocation and management of resources and facilities, and the management of strategic plans and priorities of the University, the Faculty and the School itself.

While the value and usefulness of standard terms of reference for reviews of academic units is recognised, the Executive Dean has the flexibility to provide modified or alternative terms of reference subject to approval by the PVC (L&Q).

External points of reference provide valuable perspective for further reflection and implementation of improvements; therefore an element to be considered when undertaking academic unit reviews is benchmarking against comparable units in other Go8 universities.

Panel:

The academic unit reviews will be conducted by a Review Panel. The composition of the Review Panel will be agreed between the relevant Executive Dean and the PVC (L&Q). Its membership may vary in terms of numbers and it may or may not include external panel members with relevant expertise.

Reporting:

A report covering all issues addressed by the review panel and all data provided to the panel will be submitted to the PVC (L&Q). The PVC (L&Q), in consultation with the Executive Dean of the relevant Faculty, will be responsible for ensuring that an Implementation Plan is developed.

Review reports and associated documentation such as Implementation Plans will be placed on the central University Reviews website.

PROPOSED ELEMENTS TO UNDERPIN ADMINISTRATIVE AND PARA-ACADEMIC UNIT REVIEWS

Unit of Review:

All units of the University that do not qualify as academic units are defined as administrative or para-academic units. These include, for example, the Centre for Learning Professional Development (CLPD), the International Office, Student Services.

Responsibility:

Administrative or para-academic units' reviews will be overseen and managed by the relevant Divisional Head who will also retain responsibility for determining the **process** and **panel structure** for such reviews within their Division.

Frequency:

Each administrative or para-academic unit is to be reviewed **at least** once every seven years. An initial seven year schedule of reviews will be developed by the relevant Divisional Head. The initial plan will be thereafter updated each year for the following seven years. **Where appropriate, the Executive Managers may request a review outside the cycle.**

Terms of Reference:

Reviews of administrative units will consider the quality of services and core activities, the preparedness of the area under review to deal with new challenges or priorities and the ways in which the activities support the academic activities and the aims of the University's Strategic Plan.

Given the difficulties of such an undertaking, administrative reviews might focus on a small and relatively homogenous area.

Reporting:

A report covering all issues addressed by the review panel and cover all data provided to the panel, will be submitted to the Divisional Head, who would then have the responsibility of ensuring that an Implementation Plan is developed in consultation with the head of the unit.

Review reports and associated documentation such as Implementation Plans will be placed on the central University Reviews' website.