Academic Quality Assurance Framework

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Review	3 years from date of Approval
Policy Code	AP008
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1.   PURPOSE

Academic quality assurance is a vital part of the Institute's strategic planning and is built into the general business planning and reporting processes. The Institute's Academic Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) is designed to ensure a high standard of academic integrity, to minimize risks and to continuously improve the quality of teaching, learning and research activities. The AQAF reflects a strong commitment to evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement and is designed to meet regulatory and legislative requirements. The AQAF is implemented via a coordinated system of processes that ensures academic quality assurance for the Institute.

2.   SCOPE

This Policy applies to all members of the Institute's governing bodies, management, and all academic and administrative staff, including full-time and sessional staff. The Policy applies to the Institute's courses and campuses both within Australia and offshore and to parties with which the Institute has Third Party Arrangements. It also applies to online delivery.

3.   DEFINITIONS

Academic Activities include teaching, learning, scholarship, research and research training, and broader community, professional and industry engagement.

Academic Quality Assurance is a demonstration or verification that a desired level of quality of an academic activity has been attained or sustained or is highly likely to be attained or sustained.

Benchmarking is the process of comparing processes and performances with comparable educational institutions. It enables valid and relevant comparisons and provides an external reference point for the achievement of educational standards.

External Referencing means a process through which a provider compares an aspect of its operations with a comparator's operations, or seeks input from external experts.

HES Framework (2021) is the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

Internal Referencing means a process through which a provider compares an aspect of its operations with another part of operations to ensure a consistency in approach and quality.

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students is a set of nationally consistent standards that govern the protection of international students and delivery of courses to those students by providers registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The National Code is established under *the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)*

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education.

Quality Assurance Systems are the mechanisms, processes and activities employed to verify the attainment of academic quality assurance.
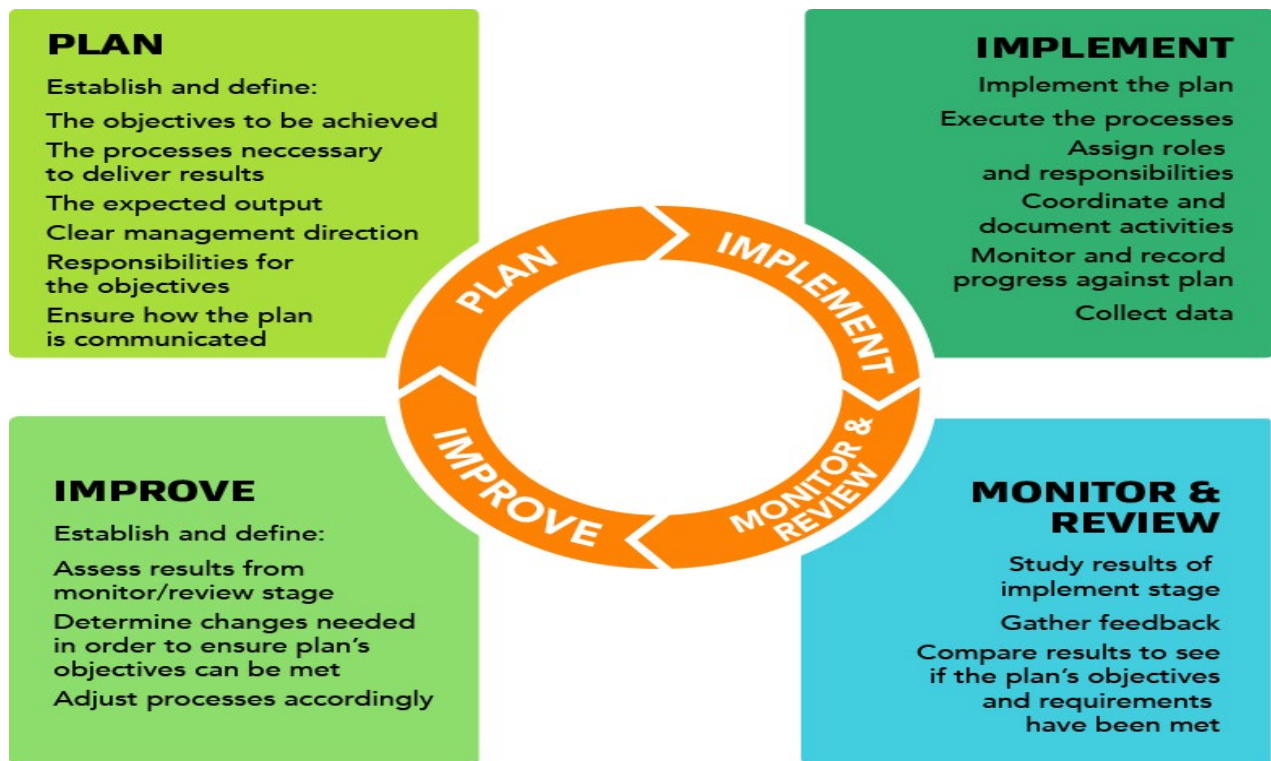
4.   THE INSTITUTE'S ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK
The AQAF has three components:

  i.   Integrated Planning, which sets the focus for what the Institute aims to do;
  ii.   Integrated Review, which establishes the balances and measures to verify if the Institute has achieved what it has set out to do;
  iii. Risk Management, which ensures that the Institute remains cognizant and responsive to risks and their potential impact.

The AQAF has implemented the Plan, Implement, Monitor/Review, and Improve (PIMI) quality assurance and continuous improvement model as shown below.[1]

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[1] The PIMI quality insurance and continuous improvement model is used by several Australian and international universities as a basis for facilitating academic quality assurance. It is based on the original Plan-DoCheck-Aact TQM model developed by W. Edwards Deming

PLAN
Establish and define:
The objectives to be achieved
The processes neccessary to deliver results
The expected output
Clear management direction
Responsibilities for the objectives
Ensure how the plan is communicated

IMPLEMENT
Implement the plan
Execute the processes
Assign roles and responsibilities
Coordinate and document activities
Monitor and record progress against plan
Collect data

IMPROVE
Establish and define:
Assess results from monitor/review stage
Determine changes needed in order to ensure plan's objectives can be met
Adjust processes accordingly

MONITOR & REVIEW
Study results of implement stage
Gather feedback
Compare results to see if the plan's objectives and requirements have been met

The AQAF helps the Institute to achieve its strategic objectives, ensure quality outcomes, minimize risks, and meet its statutory and regulatory obligations. The AQAF is predicated on the following principles.

  i.   A continuous improvement approach embedded at all levels of the Institute.
 ii.   Evidence-based and inclusive decision-making processes.
iii.   Monitoring outcomes against stated goals, performance indicators and targets.
 iv.   Using internal and external review mechanisms to assess performance, identify improvement opportunities and implement action plans and mitigation strategies.
  v.   Developing a culture of ownership, participation and responsiveness where all staff understand their individual and collective responsibility for quality processes and outcomes.

5.   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AQAF

5.1   Roles and Responsibilities
The Institute's governance bodies, and senior academic staff are responsible for quality assurance and implementation of the AQAF. All staff involved in the delivery and/or support of teaching and learning are responsible for ensuring the quality of the student education experience and contributing to the Institute's culture of continuous improvement.

5.2   Council
The Council is the supreme corporate governing body of the Institute. It exercises governance oversight and is accountable for all of the Institute's operations and is responsible for meeting the requirements of the HES Framework (2015) and achievement of Institute goals including academic quality.

5.3   Academic Board
The Academic Board (AB) upholds the academic quality standards and academic integrity of higher education provided by the Institute and ensures that they are in line with the HES Framework (2015), National Code and other professional accreditation body requirements.

5.4   Course Advisory Committee
The Course Advisory Committee (CAC) is a sub-committee of the AB and assists the AB in the processes of accreditation, course development, course change and course review, giving due regard to consistency, HESF standards, the AQF framework, quality indicators, academic scrutiny and resources. Emphasis is placed on benchmarking with the similar programs in the Australian Higher Education Sector and external referencing.

5.5   Learning and Teaching Committee
The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) has responsibility for developing and monitoring the Teaching and Learning Plan. To fulfil its quality assurance function, the LTC:

- Develops appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures of performance of teaching and learning (including student progression), which is benchmarked against international best practice;
- Implements quality assurance measures of academic programs and associated student support programs (including mode of delivery, appropriate assessment, moderation of assessment, unit outlines and unit learning material);
- Reviews and evaluates quality in teaching and learning of all award courses (including and associated student support services and programs);
- Monitors the quality and effectiveness of programs designed to facilitate the transition of students into undergraduate and postgraduate courses and from courses into careers; and
- Advises and liaises with the Deans on all matters related to student and administrative support programs and services for teaching and learning.

5.6   Research Strategy Committee
The Research Strategy Committee (RSC) directs and oversees the research agenda for the Institute. The RSC reports directly to Council and liaises with the Academic Board. Specifically, the RSC is responsible for:

- Transforming the strategic directions set by Council into research initiatives;
- Developing, implementing, reviewing and monitoring of research higher degrees programs;
- Locating, developing and implementing institutional and global research partnerships and collaborations;
- Developing, implementing, monitoring and revising the Institute's research policies to ensure high quality in all research-related activities of the Institute; and

- Providing feedback to Council on the Institute's research performance.

The RSC is supported by the Higher Degree Research and Scholarship Committee (HDRSC), which oversees the operational management of higher degree research programs, staff research grants and projects, visiting scholars and other research activities within the Institute.

5.7   Senior Academic Management

Senior Academic Management are charged with the implementation of the policies approved by the AB.   Each Dean provides regular reports to the AB and its subcommittees on the implementation of quality assurance. Reports will provide evidence for the AB to identify continuous improvement initiatives. Reporting to the AB is on a regular and frequent basis as directed by the AB. Reports address the following:

- The overall quality of a course relative to a professional discipline and educational standards;
- The educational aims and learning outcomes of the course and whether these remain appropriate;
- Student data in terms of admissions, progression, attrition, completion, student satisfaction and graduate outcomes;
- Student feedback;
- Whether courses are based on current knowledge and research and effective learning strategies;
- Adequacy of staff profile, teaching and learning space and learning resources and support; and
- Equivalence of education standards, service delivery and student experience across all Institute campuses, including those offshore, those that deliver in a language other than English, and third parties with which the Institute has an Arrangement.

5.8   Lecturers/Coordinators

Lecturers and coordinators will conduct the units in accordance with Institute Policies and Procedures and report directly to the Dean on all matters relating to the units they lecture or coordinate. As part of their contribution to the academic quality assurance of the Institute, lecturers and coordinators will:

- Deliver lectures and ensure other lectures within a unit they are coordinating are delivered in a professional manner.
- Lecture and coordinate units and assume responsibility for developing pedagogy within units.
- Ensure the quality and appropriateness of assessment by constructing examination questions and assessment tasks; ensuring students are monitored and provided with relevant and timely feedback; marking and supervising follow-up activities; and moderating the marking of other lecturers.
- Follow up on reports of student attendance, provide adequate consultation and take responsibility for maintaining standards that ensure the quality of the student experience.
- Undertake research and or scholarship in their discipline area.

6. KEY COMPONENTS OF ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.1 Quality Learning and Teaching

The Institute's Constitution of Governance (clause 5) states the "*purpose of the Institute is to advance knowledge through the provision of high-quality tertiary education, and to build a high-quality academic environment to international standard in which students acquire lifelong learning and research skills that prepare them for their professional careers and general community roles.*"

Academic Quality Assurance, which includes course development and course review, is embedded in this commitment. The Institute's courses are designed and developed by senior academics with previous senior-level experience and appointments in Australian universities, supported by the Institute's academic staff members, under the supervision of the respective Deans. The courses are reviewed regularly (or new courses are developed) via the sub-committees of AB to comply with all regulatory and quality standards and in line with sector expectations. External referencing against other like education providers, including Australian and overseas universities and by external experts in the field, ensures that reviews of academic standards are evidence-based analyses.

6.2 Academic Staff

The Institute is committed to having academic staff who are appropriately qualified at the requisite academic level and/or have professional experience to ensure that students are given the highest quality of education to facilitate their learning. Staff undergo regular professional development and receive research funding to ensure that courses are contemporary and academically rigorous.

6.3 Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

In conjunction with the achievement of academic quality, the Institute is cognizant of, and responsive to, regulatory and professional requirements including:

- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011;
- Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000;
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESF);
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF);
- Professional Accreditation requirements of; CPA Australia, Chartered Accountants ANZ, Institute of Public Accountants, and NSW Legal Profession Admissions Board.
- Local jurisdictions, including those offshore.

6.4 Policies and Procedures

The Institute's Academic Policies and Procedures are key to ensuring that educational activities meet appropriate academic standards and accord with regulatory and professional body requirements. Quality assurance of policies and procedures includes regular review and improvement to ensure that they remain current and appropriate to changing operations within the Institute and consistent with best practice in the Higher Education Sector. Quality assurance also encompasses regular review of all aspects of the Institute's educational delivery operations in order to ensure adherence to the principles and processes contained within policies and procedures.

7.   RELATED DOCUMENTS

i.   Academic Qualifications and Equivalent Professional Experience Policy
ii.   Assessment Policy and Procedure (Coursework)
iii.   Course and Unit Development Policy
iv.   Course and Unit Development Procedure
v.   Course and Unit Review Policy
vi.   Course and Unit Review Procedure
vii.   Course Delivery in A Language Other than English Policy
viii.   Moderation Policy and Procedure
ix.   Offshore Course Delivery Policy
x.   Online Course Delivery Policy
xi.   Staff Promotions Policy
xii.   Student Academic Integrity Policy
xiii.   Third Party Arrangements Policy

8.   VERSION CONTROL

Historical Version	Approved by	Approval Date
2017.08	Academic Board	29 August 2017
2017.05	Academic Board	26 May 2017
2013.12	Academic Board	19 December 2013
2009.03	Academic Board	03 March 2009