



University of Wollongong

Quality Matters

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<http://www.uow.edu.au/about/quality/>

AUQA Audit of UOW

Report released

In 2005 a quality audit of the University of Wollongong was undertaken by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The report of that audit is now publicly available on [AUQA's website](http://www.auqa.edu.au/).

The report begins with an overview of the Audit Panel's main findings in the "Conclusions" section, followed by specific commendations, affirmations and recommendations. The Audit Panel's findings in the report's nine chapters also include favourable comments and identify areas for improvement.

As an institution committed to excellence and continuous improvement, the University welcomes both AUQA's endorsement of its strengths and its suggestions for improvement. The audit preparation, portfolio compilation and the visits themselves encouraged a focused reflection and review. The commitment of all involved also demonstrated the strength of UOW's collegial culture.

A number of quality improvements will be put in place progressively over the next few years in response to both AUQA's findings and the outcomes of UOW's own self-review (see p. 4 below).

The University would like to thank the many people who contributed to the audit process both in the lead up to and during the audit visits. Your support ensured that the audit was a valuable and positive experience for the University community.

For details of the audit process, see the "Quality and Improvement" website at: <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/quality/>. If you have any comments or questions regarding the audit process or report, please do not hesitate to contact the Quality Project Team at quality@uow.edu.au.

Audit outcomes

The Conclusion section of the audit report describes the University as "a comprehensive university which has justifiably earned a good reputation for its teaching, research training, research and community engagement activities". It goes on to state that: "This reputation has been earned through innovation and entrepreneurial approaches to meeting the needs of its communities. ... The commitment to quality assurance and quality enhancement demonstrated by the University in undertaking its self-review and preparation for the AUQA audit was readily evident."

Other favourable comments noted in the "Conclusions" section of the report include the following:

- Governance and management systems for the University are reflective, sound and well trusted.
- On many measures, the University's students express a high level of satisfaction with the University.
- The University enjoys success as a strong teaching institution. Undergraduate students express high levels of satisfaction with the teaching they receive and staff are supported in their teaching through such programs as Introduction to Tertiary Teaching.
- As a research institution, the University is performing well against its goals and objectives. By clearly defining and concentrating on its research strengths, UOW has become a research-intensive university with increasing research outputs and success in attracting research funding. The research funding and quality assurance processes all appear effective.
- Research training policies and procedures are sound and in keeping with the sector.

- The University contributes significantly and in many different ways to the City of Wollongong and the Illawarra region.
- ITC is a largely successful mechanism for commercialising some of the University's activities and intellectual property. One of its most significant and successful operations is the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD). The Wollongong University College (WUC) – another of its major activities – is a successful means for providing education to international students who may not otherwise have benefited from the University.
- Student and staff support services provided on the Wollongong campus are well planned, well resourced and clearly focused on meeting the needs of students and other clients. The Library is an exemplar in the successful application of quality management systems.

Areas for improvement noted in the "Conclusions" section include the following:

- The success of planning processes at the corporate level could be used to bolster planning processes at more specific levels.
- In spite of the high level of student satisfaction, there is no clear understanding of precisely what the "UOW student experience" is (or should be) and how it is best fostered.
- In spite of the University's success as a teaching institution, there is still considerable work to do to embed the Graduate Attributes into the curriculum and into teaching and assessment practices.
- While the quality assurance arrangements for research training are sound, there is scope for further developing the teaching-research nexus.
- It is not clear how the University's regional centres fit into a comprehensive regional/community engagement plan.
- At the time of the audit, the Panel noted concerns about the lack of clarity for UOWD students regarding their precise enrolment status and the classification of their degree (UOW or UOWD). This issue – which resulted from the transition in

UOWD's accreditation status in the UAE – has since been resolved.

- At the time of the audit, the following issues regarding the UOW-WUC relationship model needed to be addressed: the status of WUC students; the authority of WUC and the learning experience for students progressing from WUC diplomas into the second year of degree programs.
- Attention is needed to marketing strategies for international students, including the clarity of information provided.

In accordance with AUQA's usual practice, the report presents for particular attention a number of **commendations, recommendations and affirmations** (reproduced in full text below). These are not prioritised or weighted but listed in the order in which they appear in the report. AUQA notes in the "Conclusions" section that most of the recommendations are designed to enhance practice which is already of a high standard. Many of these issues are already being addressed by the University as part of its ongoing quality improvement.

Commendations

[Relating to commendable practices identified by the panel. Where such a practice is potentially transferable, it may be included on AUQA's Good Practice Database.]

1. AUQA commends UOW for attending to the professional development needs of its managers through the Leadership Development Program, which is well-regarded by participants.
2. AUQA commends UOW for successfully facilitating the transition from the student experience to graduate life and career.
3. AUQA commends UOW for undertaking a comprehensive review against its Teaching and Learning.
4. AUQA commends UOW for implementing an Introduction to Tertiary Teaching course that is credible, comprehensive and appreciated by staff and likely to enhance the current high standard of teaching university-wide.
5. AUQA commends UOW and its student "peer leaders" for effectively implementing the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program in a manner

that results in superior student assessment results.

6. AUQA commends UOW for implementing an approach to plagiarism avoidance and referencing that encourages widespread awareness and understanding of the issues.
7. AUQA commends UOW for successfully identifying and implementing a strategy for concentrating on areas of research strength, thereby providing effective focus to resource allocations and leading to positive research outcomes.
8. AUQA commends UOW for its fast-tracked postgraduate scholarships scheme, which facilitates student progression to graduate study in the University's areas of research strength.
9. AUQA commends UOW for developing an organisational culture and administrative systems conducive to its research commercialisation goals.
10. AUQA commends UOW for implementing a sound strategy, with appropriate controls, for managing its technology transfer opportunities.
11. AUQA commends UOW Library for a firmly embedded culture of quality consciousness which leads to strong results for most measurable outcomes.
12. AUQA commends UOW for achieving the effective implementation of an academic staff workload management policy which staff generally regard as acceptable and fair.
13. AUQA commends UOW for establishing a successful and mature campus in Dubai which provides higher education programs and a learning environment equivalent to that at its home campus in Wollongong.

Affirmations

[Relating to areas which have already been identified by the University in its Performance Portfolio as needing attention.]

1. AUQA affirms UOW's project to develop and fully populate a web-based, searchable policy database that includes sufficient document control information to ensure the integrity and the integration of all policies.

2. AUQA affirms the need for UOW to explore institutional relationships with appropriate partners that will enable benchmarking activities for monitoring of standards and quality improvement purposes.
3. AUQA affirms UOW's recognition of the need to further develop systems to ensure that its graduate attributes are embedded in its curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, and of the need to ensure that this recognition is shared by all staff.
4. AUQA affirms the need identified by UOW to develop a systematic approach to effecting the link between research and teaching in order to promote learning as, inter alia, a process of inquiry.
5. AUQA affirms the need identified by UOW to improve its biosafety management.

Recommendations

[Relating to areas the Panel believes require improvement, as at the date of the audit. Many of these issues are already being addressed by the University as part of its ongoing quality improvement and some have been resolved.]

1. AUQA recommends that, in order to ensure the maintenance of effective senior management, UOW develop a clear strategy of business continuity and deputisations at senior levels.
2. AUQA recommends that UOW consider establishing more specific qualitative and quantitative targets in its planning process in order to help determine and measure the pace and extent of progress against its strategic goals.
3. AUQA recommends that UOW consider establishing a system of regular reviews of its academic units or otherwise ensuring that sufficient independent input is regularly obtained on a comprehensive range of academic and academic management issues.
4. AUQA recommends that UOW extend its risk management framework, guided by its Risk Management Policy and including methods of risk identification, assessment, treatment and monitoring, throughout the University.
5. AUQA recommends that UOW develop an approach to its various campus

operations, whereby the purpose and inter-relationships of each campus are part of a comprehensive University plan.

6. AUQA recommends that UOW routinely conduct comparative analyses of student learning outcomes across its various modes and locations of teaching as one way of monitoring equivalence.
7. AUQA recommends that UOW further develop and communicate systems to ensure that its Research Graduate Attributes are embedded in its curriculum, supervision and assessment practices.
8. AUQA recommends that UOW communicate and practice clear and consistent policy on the intellectual property rights of its students.
9. AUQA recommends that UOW strengthen its quality controls in relation to how it promotes itself and its programs, with particular emphasis on its promotion to international markets.
10. AUQA recommends that UOW establish a more comprehensive framework for the quality assurance of its offshore activities, perhaps overseen by a high level University committee.
11. AUQA recommends that UOW, in keeping with its principles and values, take immediate steps to address the disproportionately low number of women at senior levels in the organization.
12. AUQA recommends that UOW immediately resolve and communicate to the students which degree current students at UOWD will receive upon graduation.
13. AUQA recommends that UOW clarify the registration status of the Wollongong University College; the accreditation status of diploma programs offered by WUC; and the enrolment status of WUC students, in accordance with MCEETYA's *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*.

Next Steps in Quality Improvement

Progress Report

In around 18 months, the University is required to make a Progress Report publicly available on its website, which will be linked to AUQA's website. The purpose of the report is to show what the University has done in response to the recommendations and affirmations in the Audit Report. For each recommendation and affirmation, the University is expected to report either:

- demonstrable progress;
- established plans for addressing the matter; or
- sound reasons why the matter will not be pursued.

These matters will be followed up by AUQA during the next audit of UOW. If the AUQA process operates as before, this University will be audited again (together with all other universities and accrediting agencies) during the 2007-2012 audit cycle.

Quality Improvement Plan

Over the next few months, the University, via a special steering committee, will develop a Quality Improvement Plan which will set out strategies to address the quality issues raised by AUQA which have not yet been fully resolved. Progress against this Plan will form the basis of the Progress Report required to be released in 2007.

