

# QUALITY REVIEW FRAMEWORK

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## 1. Aim

As a self-accrediting institution, the University of Wollongong has a fundamental obligation to ensure that it upholds academic standards and provides high-quality programs and services. Reviews are important to achieving that aim.

This document provides a framework for quality reviews which can be applied to reviews of processes, programs, units and the University as a whole.

A review should:

- i. identify strengths to be built on and opportunities for improvement
- ii. provide opportunities to reflect on goals and achievements
- iii. invigorate the planning process
- iv. improve engagement across the unit and the University

## 2. Quality Cycle

Reviews are an integral part of the University's overall quality cycle and planning context.

**Diagram 1: UOW Quality Cycle**



The University has defined a cyclical quality process – Plan, Act, Review, Improve – to ensure that its objectives and standards are tested and improved. This cycle can be applied to all processes and activities undertaken at the University.

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

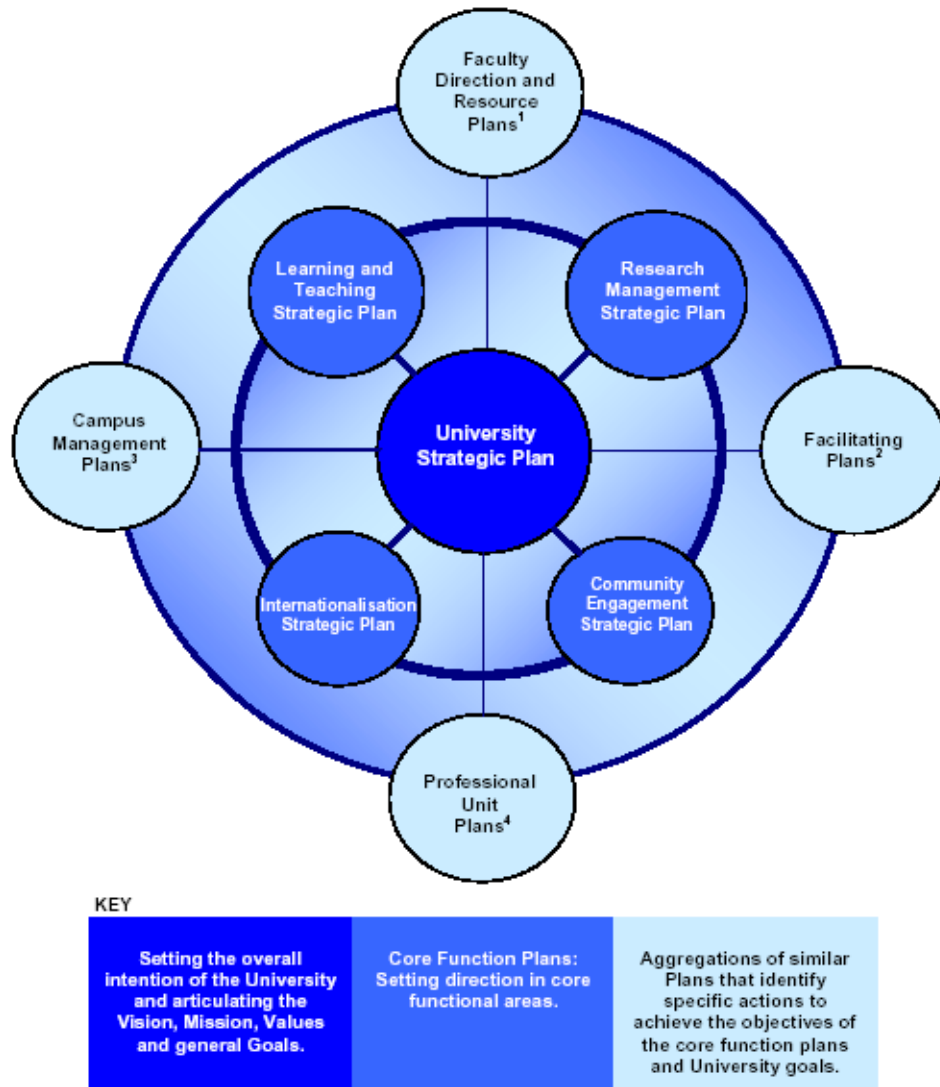
**ACT** ... identify and schedule actions for achieving our objectives and implement those strategies.

**REVIEW** ... monitor how we are progressing towards achieving our objectives.

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

## Diagram 2: UOW Planning context

Connections between the strategic plans and the dependence of each plan on the others to achieve the University's goals.



### 3. Review Principles

The following review principles should be incorporated into any review:

- a rigorous, transparent and collegial process
- clearly defined responsibilities for initiation and carriage of the review process
- a realistic timeframe that fits with faculty, unit or division planning cycles
- a clear statement of the scope of and terms of reference for the review
- recognition of diverse approaches within the University

- objectivity, for example through external<sup>1</sup> representation or input
- appropriate reporting, approval and implementation of the outcomes of the review

Guidelines for conducting Course Reviews and Subject Reviews are attached at Appendices A and B, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> External may mean external to the discipline, unit, faculty, division or University

## **APPENDIX A: COURSE REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **1 Scope of a Course Review**

A course review must address the following:

1. Course objectives.
2. Consistency of the course objectives with the achievement of University and Faculty directions and objectives.
3. Quality improvement.

### **2 Planning and Quality Framework**

Course reviews are conducted as part of the faculty's planning cycle and the University's quality cycle. The Dean foreshadows, in the annual Faculty Direction and Resource Report, which courses are targeted for review after taking account of their performance, any changes in the course or faculty's direction, or accreditation requirements.

Formal reviews take place every five years for courses with large enrolments, or as required by faculty strategic development and/or course performance issues identified by the Dean or in the faculty's annual reporting. It may be worthwhile to group smaller courses in a suite for review, as approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Alternatively, with some degrees, it may be appropriate to review specialisations or a suite of specialisations.

Although each degree component of a double degree course may be reviewed separately, the review of the single degree should include consideration of associated double degree arrangements. [Note: The administration of the University's double degree programs is a complex area which requires further attention].

Some courses are offered jointly with other education providers – such as TAFE and other Universities – and the course review process will need to be negotiated with those partners.

A course review may have implications for the administration of a teaching unit and/or the Faculty and trigger the Vice-Chancellor's initiation of wider-reaching reviews.

### **3 External Accreditation**

Where a course requires accreditation by an external professional body, such an accreditation can be accepted by the Dean in lieu of an internal course review.

### **4 Course Review Process**

The Dean of the Faculty may recommend a variation of this review process as appropriate for the Faculty for Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approval. It can be adapted to particular circumstances (for example, where an external accreditation takes place).

#### 4.1 Initiation of Review

A Course Review will be formally initiated by the Vice-Chancellor or the Dean, in consultation with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic). A Review Committee will be convened by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who will also appoint the Chair. The Committee will receive administrative support from the Faculty Office.

#### 4.2 Review Committee

##### Review Committee Membership

- Chair of Visiting Committee or External Course Advisory Committee;
- Dean of the Faculty or nominee;
- FEC Chair or nominee;
- One or more external experts in the discipline/profession appointed by Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in consultation with Dean;
- A student representative from and nominated by the student representatives on the Faculty Committee.

**NOTE:** The Dean may recommend a variation of the Committee membership to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

##### Review Committee Terms of Reference

- (i) To identify strengths, weaknesses and other matters pertinent to the achievement of the course, faculty and University objectives.
- (ii) To make recommendations on:
  - course objectives and their consistency with University and Faculty objectives;
  - the scope for quality improvement and appropriate innovation;
  - the future structure and delivery of the course;
  - support, infrastructure and communication issues.
- (iii) To provide a report containing recommendations and an action and improvement plan to the Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic).
- (iv) Any other matters proposed by the Dean or Committee and approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

#### 4.3 Consultation

The Review Committee will consult as widely as it considers necessary and specifically:

- invite the Course Co-coordinator/Head of Unit and other staff and students (as appropriate) to meet with the Committee;
- visit the unit where necessary to inspect facilities.

Further comments may be sought from other interested parties, including graduates, staff of other faculties and external bodies. Results of surveys of students and graduates are available from the Strategic Planning Unit.

#### 4.4 Evaluation

The Review Committee will evaluate the course and prepare a report in accordance with section 4.2(iii).

##### Evaluation Criteria

Criteria for evaluation must address:

- Course achievements against the course goals.
- Course achievements against the University's mission and objectives for student learning.
- Contribution to the achievement of the objectives in the Faculty Plan.
- Relevance of the course within the discipline in Australia and overseas.
- Quality improvement.

Evaluation criteria should include, for example:

- Appropriateness of core and elective subjects.
- Level of academic staff resources.
- Suitability of physical resources, library resources, student services/support and learning resources.
- Adequacy of supervision and course advice through the relevant academic unit.
- Appropriateness of assessment practices.
- Professional accreditation/feedback; employer feedback; overseas partner feedback (if applicable).
- The course's relationship to and impact upon other programs.
- Competitor analysis. For example, comparison of range of course specialisations, depths, assessment, academic standards.
- Student demand against expectations (i.e. actual enrolments, as against projected "market" targets).
- Student completion and retention rates; satisfactory student progress and proportion of students on Minimum Rate of Progress;
- Student satisfaction (Subject Survey, where available); graduate satisfaction (Course Experience Questionnaire).
- Graduate destinations; rates of progress to postgraduate study/research.
- Cross-institutional comparisons. For example, student/graduate outcomes, degree structures, electives offered, employer expectations, construction of Honours programs, 1st class Honours ratios.

#### 4.5 Action and Improvement Plan

Based on the outcomes of the Review, the Review Committee will prepare an Action and Improvement Plan which:

- Identifies areas for strengthening, amendment or deletion.
- Revises course goals as appropriate for next planning cycle.
- Revises Evaluation Criteria, as appropriate, for the next review cycle.

## **5 Review Outcomes and Reporting**

1. The Review Report and the Action and Improvement Plan or the outcomes of an external accreditation review process (refer to section 3) are submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) who discusses the recommendations with the Dean and advises the Vice-Chancellor.
2. The Review outcomes are reported to the University Education Committee, Academic Senate Standing Committee and Academic Senate.
3. The Faculty implements the recommendations as appropriate and:
  - any consequent amendments to the course are submitted for approval via the Faculty Education Committee, Senate Standing Committee and Academic Senate.
  - recommendations for changes to administrative structures are considered by the Dean and Faculty Executive who may then forward a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor with regard to further action, including Unit or Faculty review.
4. Following the review, the Faculty monitors the course performance and the Dean reports via the annual Faculty Planning and Resource Report.

## **APPENDIX B: SUBJECT REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **1 Scope of a Subject Review**

A subject review must address the following:

1. Subject objectives;
2. Development of tertiary literacies;
3. Consistency of subject objectives with course and Faculty objectives;
4. Quality improvement.

### **2 Planning and Quality Framework**

Subject Reviews are part of the annual cycle linked to the annual Faculty Direction and Resource Report. The faculty's full subject portfolio will be reviewed by the end of the faculty's full five-year review cycle.

Subject Reviews are also linked to the requirements for feedback on overall course performance in terms of academic content, teaching approach and student attraction and retention.

Subjects may be reviewed in specialisation strands, years or categories, either:

- (i) in a rolling, five-year quality assurance review; or
- (ii) as an integral part of a five-year Course Review.

Subjects may also be reviewed individually where a need for such review has been identified by the Unit or Faculty.

### 3 Subject Review Process

#### 3.1 Initiation of Review

The selection of subject groupings and the scheduling for each annual review are determined by the Dean of the Faculty on the recommendation of the Faculty Education Committee and with reference to the Faculty strategic development and/or performance issues identified in the annual Faculty Planning and Resources Report.

#### 3.2 Review Coordinator

For each Subject Review, the faculty must appoint a Review Coordinator (a member of staff who has not taught the subject for two or more years) and, if either the Review Coordinator or the Dean believes that further action is necessary, appoint a small Review Committee, with membership determined by the Dean.

#### 3.3 Consultation

Comment on the subject/s under review will be sought from:

- (i) Students: through the Subject Review Survey (see core questions in Attachment 1 to these Guidelines), the use of which is **mandatory** in Subject Reviews. Subject-specific questions may be added to the core list by the Faculty, Unit or Review Coordinator. (CEDIR can provide assistance with analysis of the Subject Review Survey responses.)

If appropriate, feedback can also be sought through less formal means, either via their representatives or through open feedback sessions in class. Students and staff should be encouraged to see subject evaluation as a cooperative and mutually beneficial exercise aimed at quality improvement.

Feedback should be provided to participating students on the outcomes of the review.

- (ii) Academic Peers: through peer evaluation of subject documentation, materials and performance, as measured against stated learning outcomes. (Peer review of other teaching materials would also be a normal expectation if the staff member intends to use those materials as evidence of quality teaching and effectiveness in career development).
- (iii) Colleagues in other units or Faculties or other Universities on learning outcomes, content, resources, delivery methods and assessment as part of a benchmarking exercise.

#### 3.4 Evaluation

In evaluating the subject, the Review Coordinator should analyse feedback and relevant evidence to measure performance against subject and course objectives and achievement of identified learning outcomes.

## Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria should address the following areas:

1. The appropriateness of learning outcomes
2. The suitability and currency of subject content, teaching materials and assessment
3. The expectations of the relevant discipline or profession
4. Subject achievements against course, faculty and University goals

Evaluation criteria should include, for example, consideration of whether:

- The subject meets the expectations of the relevant discipline or profession, including approaches to ethical behaviour, professional conduct and scholarship
- The learning outcomes reflect:
  - the objectives of the course or courses in which the subject is taught
  - the objectives of the University's Learning & Teaching Strategic Plan
  - the standards of performance expected for a higher education subject at the relevant level
- The assessment is appropriate, and whether its relationship to the learning outcomes is clear.
- The tertiary literacies and Attributes of a Wollongong Graduate have been integrated into the subject.
- The subject's organisation and delivery is effective, particularly in relation to student-centered learning, integration of higher order skills and self-direction.
- The facilities are suitable and accessible.
- The subject content is culturally inclusive. (as appropriate)
- Student demand meets expectation.
- Student retention rates and performance compare well with other subjects within the discipline/course.

### 3.5 Action and Improvement Plan

Based on the consultation feedback and the evaluation, the Review Coordinator will prepare a summary report, making recommendations for action and improvement by:

- Identifying areas for strengthening, amendment or deletion.
- Revising learning outcomes as appropriate for the next planning cycle.
- Identifying any additional resources needed.

## 4 Review Outcomes, Reporting and Implementation

1. The Head of Unit submits a summary report on subjects reviewed to the Faculty Education Committee (FEC).
2. The FEC considers the proposals and forwards the improvement plan to the Dean with comment as required.

3. The Dean considers and approves the improvement (discussing any amendments with the Head of Unit).
4. The FEC recommends improvements that may enhance practice in other subjects to the Dean and to the University Education Committee.
5. A course amendment form is submitted to the Senate Standing Committee if subject changes impact on the structure of the course.
6. The Dean reports on reviewed subjects in the annual Faculty Planning & Resource Report.

## Attachment 1 to Subject Review Guidelines – Core Subject Review Survey

1. The learning objectives for this subject were made clear.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of the learning objectives, do you have any comments?

[text box]

2. The criteria for assessment in this subject were made clear.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of the criteria for assessment, do you have any comments?

[text box]

3. I have developed a good understanding of the content of this subject.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of the subject's content, do you have any comments?

[text box]

4. My learning in this subject was well supported.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of support for your learning, do you have any comments?

[text box]

5. This subject helped me to think critically/analytically.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of helping you to think critically/analytically, do you have any comments?

[text box]

6. As a result of my experience with this subject I am enthusiastic about further learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of your learning experience, do you have any comments?

[text box]

7. Overall I am satisfied with my learning experience in this subject.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In terms of your satisfaction with this subject, do you have any comments?

[text box]

Insert further subject subject-specific questions from this point as required

Final question:

Do you have any other comments about this subject?

[text box]

## **APPENDIX C: FACULTY REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **1 Purpose of a Faculty Review**

The purpose of a Faculty review is to identify areas for quality improvement and innovation. A Faculty review also clarifies the Faculty's planning and strategic objectives and how these are consistent with the broader University strategies, particularly in the areas of research, learning and teaching, internationalisation and community engagement.

### **2 Planning/QA Framework**

Faculty planning relates directly to the objectives in the core function plans for Research, Learning and Teaching, Internationalisation and Community Engagement. When setting Faculty direction, Faculties are required to take into consideration the Faculty as a whole, departmental/school/unit planning, and off-campus teaching locations. Faculty direction is articulated and updated through Faculty Direction and Resource Reports.

In order to support new strategies and initiatives, Faculty planning is also linked to the annual University budget process.

Faculty Direction and Resource Reports provide the means for Faculties to undertake annual monitoring and reporting against relevant indicators, and to make decisions on future planning. The Faculty planning process provides for a continual, integrated planning and review loop.

### **3 Faculty Review and Restructure Process**

The monitoring and reporting process by Faculties may raise the need for a fuller Faculty review and/or restructure. A review or restructure of a Faculty will be initiated by the Vice-Chancellor on advice from the relevant Dean and/or the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Operations).

#### **3.1 Faculty Review**

Where the need for a Faculty review is identified, in consultation with the Dean and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Operations), the Vice-Chancellor will:

- a) Establish terms of reference for the review,
- b) Identify a suitable timeframe for the review, and
- c) Convene a Review Committee

##### **3.1.1 Review Committee Membership**

The Review Committee will be constituted by:

- A Pro Vice-Chancellor
- The Chair or Deputy Chair of Senate
- The Chair of a Faculty Visiting Committee
- One senior external expert in a relevant and related field

### **3.1.2 Review Committee Process**

The Review Committee will:

- a) Confirm the terms of reference for the review
- b) Identify any information or data required beyond that provided in the Faculty Direction and Resource Report
- c) Determine the process of consultation with interested parties, in accordance with section 3.1.3
- d) Provide a report on the review that includes recommendations for improvements and a plan for further action

### **3.1.3 Consultation**

The Review Committee will consult as widely as it considers necessary and will invite senior staff, other general and academic staff and students (if appropriate) to meet with the Committee. Further input should be sought from other interested parties, including external accreditation bodies and other external interested parties, and senior staff of other Faculties (if necessary).

### **3.1.4 Review Recommendations and Implementation**

Upon completion of the review, the review report will be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor, who will refer it to the Faculty for a response.

The review report and Faculty response will be forwarded to Academic Senate for approval and the University Council for noting.

### **3.1.5 Reporting on Action Arising from a Review**

Faculties will report in their subsequent Faculty Direction and Resource Report on progress in implementing the review outcomes.

## **3.2 Faculty Restructures**

A Faculty review may identify a need for a Faculty restructure. Faculty restructures may also be triggered by external factors. A clear rationale for any restructure must be developed.

### **3.2.1 Types of Restructures**

There are two types of Faculty restructure that may take place: **intra-Faculty** restructures, where the impact of the restructure is on units or management structures within the Faculty, and **inter-Faculty** restructures, where the impact may affect other Faculties or areas of the University.

### **3.2.2 Consultation**

Any proposal for a restructure requires consultation within the Faculty. Further consultation must be conducted as required by section 3.1.3 above.

### 3.2.3 Agreement

A proposal for a restructure requires initial agreement at a Faculty Executive Committee meeting. Agreement for such a proposal should also be sought from the Vice-Chancellor, and the proposal notified to Academic Senate and the University Council.

### 3.2.4 Approval and Reporting

Initial approval for a revised or new Faculty structure must be obtained from the Vice-Chancellor. A report on the restructure that includes the rationale for the restructure, details of all consultation conducted and the outcomes of the process must be submitted to Academic Senate for noting and the University Council for approval.

### 3.3 Academic Unit Reviews

The Faculty planning and monitoring process may also identify the need for a review of an Academic Unit within the Faculty. The process for Academic Unit reviews should reflect the process for Faculty reviews, as set out in section 3.1 of this document, with the exception of section 3.1.1. Review Committee Membership.

The members of a Review Committee for an Academic Unit review will be appointed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Operations) and will include at least one member of the Faculty (e.g. Dean, Head of another Unit, FEC Chair etc) and at least one other member from outside the Faculty.

### Modification History

Date:	Resolution no:	Authority:	Details:
28 July 2004	57/04	Academic Senate	Replaces: Academic Planning, Performance & Evaluation, and Review Procedures for Academic Units