



Welcome to the first Planning and Quality newsletter for 2009. We plan to issue three in the series during 2009.

This issue of imPAQt sees the University in the middle of its 2008-10 planning cycle and at the beginning of a challenging year. Read more here →

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This newsletter is published by the Strategic Planning & Quality Office.

For further information about items in this newsletter, contact Ext. 4748 [daled@uow.edu.au](mailto:daled@uow.edu.au)

### The year ahead...

In 2009, we start to prepare for the AUQA Audit scheduled for early 2011 and also to review the Strategic Plan. This is happening in the context of an evolving reform agenda sparked by two major reviews - Bradley (on higher education) and Cutler (on innovation). And, added to the mix, we have a Global Financial Crisis that is tempering government responses.

However, as the lead article on the highlights of 2008 shows below, UOW is building on a strong base.

### 2008 in Review

In 2008, the University conducted the first review against its goals using a Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF). The PMF's institutional targets were adapted for faculty review and planning reports. Their responses added to the performance outcomes and data reviewed by senior goal committees at the end of the year.

The full reports on UOW's 2008 performance under each goal will be available soon from the Strategic Planning & Quality [website](#).

They're an interesting read that should help to give context for planning at all levels. Performance highlights for the past year include:

- a place in top 2% of world universities (Shanghai Jiao Tong and Times rankings)
- a continuing position in top 10 Australian universities for ARC grant income (on size)
- top ranking in every discipline ranking in Australian Learning & Teaching Fund
- number one position for educational experience and graduate outcomes in Good Universities Guide (for ninth year in succession)
- above national average results in the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
- two major new developments - the SMART Infrastructure Facility and the Illawarra Health & Medical Research Institute.
- the official opening of the landmark iC Central building on the Innovation Campus and completion of two other major buildings
- continuing growth of UOW Dubai – course enrolments of over 3000 by December 2008
- the inaugural 'Welcome to Wollongong' event for new international students
- the Certificate of Workplace Learning as one part of a focus on and co-ordination of experiential learning initiatives.

The University contributed nearly \$700m to the local economy with \$99m from the Innovation Campus project.

## Planning & Review

### Federal Review of Higher Education

Our first edition is published as changes are underway that can affect the university sector's structure, funding and future planning. After receiving the findings of the [Bradley review](#), the Federal Government has announced what it calls a "new student-centred, demand driven, higher education system".

In a [speech](#) to a Universities Australia Conference on 4 March 2009 the Deputy Prime Minister announced:

- A target that by 2025, 40% of Australian 25-34 year olds will have a bachelor level or above qualification.
- From 2012 universities will be funded on the basis of student demand. This means the Government will fund a Commonwealth supported place for all domestic students accepted into an eligible, accredited higher education course at a recognised public higher education provider.
- From 2010, the current cap on over enrolment will be raised from 5 to 10 percent and removed completely in 2012.
- The Government will establish a national regulatory and quality agency for higher education. Providers will be regulated by this body, who will carry out audits of standards and performance, quality assure international education, and provide for national consistency by streamlining current regulatory arrangements.

What actually happens will be determined in the May Federal budget. Reports are already suggesting that spending to turn around the 'Global Financial Crisis' may make inroads into the reforms and the funding that needs to accompany them.

### Key References and Websites

UOW Planning & Quality website

<http://www.uow.edu.au/planquality/>

AUQA website

<http://www.auqa.edu.au/>

Review of Australian Higher Education website

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/FutureDirectionsforTertiaryEducation.aspx>

Speech by The Hon Julia Gillard MP at Universities Australia Conference

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article\\_090304\\_155721.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_090304_155721.aspx)

Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education Report

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/ReviewofAustralianHigherEducationReport.aspx>

Universities Australia website

<http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>

National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/policy\\_issues\\_reviews/key\\_issues/MCEETYAS/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/MCEETYAS/)

### Planning 2009

In 2009, the second of the three-year Strategic Planning cycle, we are looking to refine the processes used to implement and report against the existing Strategic Plan. For instance, the planning and budget processes and timeframes are being more closely linked this year to support more informed decision-making and future planning. This improvement and other upgrades should introduce more manageable response times and a tighter focus for the 2009 faculty and unit planning cycles.

From 24 to 26 June, the Senior Executive, Deans and Directors will attend the annual **UOW Planning Conference** where they will address the strategic issues facing the University, particularly in the light of the Government's May Budget.

This Newsletter will bring you the Conference outcomes in July. In early September, Heads of Units will have an opportunity to hear and discuss the issues and updates at a larger Planning Forum, and then take this information back to their individual planning forums generally held towards the end of the year.



From September, the University Planning & Quality Committee (UPAQ) will begin its review of the Strategic Plan with a view to developing the 2011-13 Plan (in consultation with the UOW and wider community) for approval by the end of 2010.

### Strategic Projects 2009

Strategic Projects are established to facilitate the achievement of strategic priorities and other outcomes under the University's Goals. They are intended to capitalise on opportunities within our internal and external environments to move the University into a position of advantage and promote innovation and flexibility.

After a review at the start of 2009, the following projects were selected:

- Development of UOW research assessment and quality and impact framework (ERA)
- Ensuring international student engagement and success
- The outbound student experience
- Development of a UOW framework for promoting knowledge exchange through interactive gateways, from experiential learning and placement programs to provision of a dedicated physical centre.

Options for new projects to position UOW post-Bradley will be considered at the June Planning Conference.

### The Academic Review Policy

The *Quality Review Framework* was extensively re-assessed in 2008 to take account of the recommendations of UOW's first AUQA Audit report and changes in course rules, compliance issues and subject review procedures.

In 2008, a revised policy document was developed, in consultation with all key players, with a view to:

- strengthening the Academic Unit review process then embedded in the planning system
- defining the role of Faculty Advisory Committees as monitoring bodies
- streamlining and highlighting the link between the approval and review of courses

Approved by Senate and Council for implementation from 1 January 2009, the Academic Review Policy sits at the core of academic quality at the University.

The Policy and Guidelines are available at: <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/documents/UOWacademicreviewpolicy.pdf>

They cover:

- Academic quality management structure and review principles
- The role and composition of Faculty Advisory Committees
- Faculty and Academic Unit reviews - 3-stage, standard reporting cycle **PLUS** intensive reviews (development or performance triggers, faculty-or centrally administered)
- Curriculum review and development (to a set schedule).

Briefing sessions for faculty staff have already begun. The first round of scheduled Curriculum Reviews is due to start in July. Intensive faculty/academic unit reviews will be triggered through the planning and reporting cycle and the first triennial Faculty Review Reports are due next year.

Faculties are required to report curriculum and unit review schedules and completions in their annual Faculty Planning Reports.

### AUQA Audit – The Second Coming

The Australian Universities Quality Agency's (AUQA) second audit cycle began in 2008 with nine universities audited under this cycle to-date. UOW's turn will come in early 2011.

The first round featured 'whole-of-institution' audits. This time, two areas of activity (themes) will be chosen for detailed attention. These areas will be selected in consultation with the University, and will be guided (as AUQA requires) by considerations of "academic risk". Additionally, AUQA will look at actions arising from the first audit.

In the early stages of our preparations, a number of actions have been undertaken or are planned for early 2009. They include:

- An academic risk assessment exercise was completed late 2008.
- An AUQA Audit Steering Group was set up early 2009 to provide advice on preparations.
- A review against the Federal Government's National Protocols for Higher Education is currently underway (as required by AUQA)
- A revised Quality Improvement Plan to be prepared mid year, informed by the 2008 Academic Risk Assessment.

### Academic Standards

In the second round of audits, AUQA is placing a greater emphasis on **standards and performance outcomes**. In particular, AUQA is seeking evidence of how the institution sets, maintains and reviews academic standards and outcomes, together with evidence of the institution's comparative national and international performance.

For each theme area, AUQA will be asking:

- How are standards determined?
- How are standards applied consistently across the University?
- How are outcomes monitored?
- How are standards and outcomes compared nationally and internationally?
- How is this information used to improve standards?
- What processes are in place to ensure that standards are updated?

AUQA has established an Advisory Group to help institutions provide this evidence and to guide the audit panels in their investigations. The Group has been asked to "develop a generalisable national structure for academic standards for Australian higher education, in collaboration with the sector, by the end of 2009".

"This structure should be technically rigorous, informed by research and designed to monitor and enhance practice. It should inspire demonstrable diversity and excellence, and should offer Australian institutions ways of demonstrating performance that suit their individual missions. Importantly, it should help to position Australian higher education at the forefront of international practice".  
<http://www.auqa.edu.au/aboutauqa/news/articles/article.php?id=44>

Watch this space for more information.

## Focus on: Benchmarking

### What is benchmarking?

Simply put, benchmarking is the process of learning from good practices used by other organisations to improve one's own practices and outcomes. It is a means by which the University can monitor its relative performance, identify gaps, seek fresh approaches and bring about improvements.

Benchmarking can be as simple as doing a desktop survey of relevant websites, or it may involve a formal request for information and/or an agreement with another university or group of universities.

It can be about broad institution-wide issues or specific matters affecting only one area; it can be strategic (addressing priority issues) or cyclical (addressing a number of areas on a regular basis) or ad hoc (taking advantage of an opportunity).

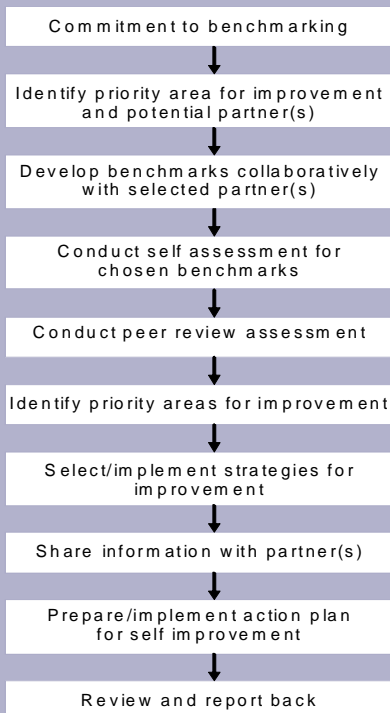
Whatever its scope or subject matter, benchmarking is an important element of the University's quality improvement cycle.

### Why benchmark?

Benchmarking allows the University to:

- identify and monitor standards and performance in order to improve outcomes
- provide an evidence-based framework for change and improvement
- discover new ideas/ways of achieving objectives
- bring an external focus to a review of its activities
- improve decision-making through referencing comparative data

### What's involved?



## A Benchmarking Project with UTAS

A benchmarking relationship between the University of Wollongong and the University of Tasmania was officially announced last month (23 March) when the respective Vice-Chancellors, Professor Gerard Sutton and Professor Daryl Le Grew, signed a Memorandum of Understanding via a teleconference link.

The first project to be undertaken was developed collaboratively between the two institutions and will focus on **Academic Transition Support**.

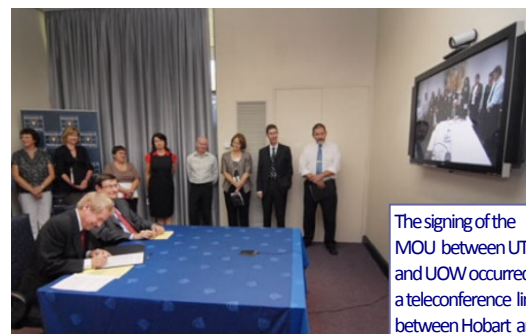
“Academic transition support” is a broad term that can cover the facilitation of student transition into, through and out of the university learning environment. This includes developing aspirations before applying to study at university, providing pathways into university, facilitating adjustment to academic life (including academic, administrative and social processes), supporting the development of academic literacies and supporting the transition of students into further study and/or the workplace.

**For the purposes of this project, academic transition support will be limited to all first-year students undertaking undergraduate programs onshore (including domestic and international) for the period from the letter of offer to the end of the first year of study.**

The project involves various academic and support units contributing to an institutional self assessment against 10 performance indicators. This will be followed mid year by a peer assessment undertaken with our colleagues at UTAS. From this we hope to be able to:

- gain a better understanding of relevant programs and activities across campus
- identify areas of good practice
- identify gaps
- learn from the good practices at UTAS
- identify priority areas for improvement
- develop strategies for improvement
- share information with UTAS
- learn more about the process of benchmarking

The project is being conducted and monitored by a Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS) Working Group of the University Education Committee. For more information contact Dale Dumpleton on ext. 4748 [daled@uow.edu.au](mailto:daled@uow.edu.au) or Jan Sullivan on ext. 3573 [jsulliva@uow.edu.au](mailto:jsulliva@uow.edu.au)



The signing of the MOU between UTAS and UOW occurred via a teleconference link between Hobart and Wollongong.

## A Guide to the Planning & Quality Committees

UOW's Strategic Planning and Quality is driven and monitored by three major bodies:

- the University Planning and Quality Committee (UPAQ)
- AUQA Audit Steering Group
- Goal Monitoring Committees

In this edition, we are featuring UPAQ.

UPAQ is a senior committee reporting to the Vice-Chancellor on:

- the UOW Strategic Plan and the strategic planning structure – reviewing it on a three-year basis and making recommendations for the next Plan and cycle
- annual performance against the UOW Goals and Objectives (under the Performance Monitoring Framework indicators) and reporting to Academic Senate and to Council
- improvements to review and planning processes to enhance alignment with the UOW Strategic Plan
- quality assurance and improvement processes, including the University Quality Improvement Plan
- requirements for AUQA audits
- the effectiveness of consultation and communication processes for planning and quality activities

UPAQ comprises Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (Chair); Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations); Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research); Pro Vice-Chancellor (International); Vice-Principal Administration; Deputy Vice-Principal (Finance & IT); Two Deans appointed by the Vice-Chancellor; Chair of Senate; Chair of QAS; University Librarian; Academic Registrar; Senior representative, UniAdvice; and Director, Planning Services.

## Key dates for 2009

<b>February</b>	AUQA Audit Steering Group formed
<b>23 March</b>	Launch of Benchmarking Project with UTAS
<b>18 May</b>	Institutional Self Assessment for UTAS/UOW Benchmarking Project
<b>May</b>	Benchmarking status report completed
<b>16 June</b>	Peer Self Assessment with UTAS Benchmarking Partner
<b>24-26 June</b>	UOW Planning Conference
<b>June</b>	Desk review of compliance with National Protocols for Higher Education completed
<b>June</b>	Quality Improvement Plan updated to reflect risk assessment outcomes, benchmarking and compliance reviews
<b>1-3 July</b>	Australian Universities Quality Forum (AUQF) Alice Springs
<b>3 Sept</b>	UOW Planning Forum
<b>September</b>	Submission of themes to AUQA
<b>November</b>	Approval of themes by AUQA

## Who's who in SPQ

Dale Dumbleton	Strategic Planning Officer	4748
Joanne McCrea	Senior Officer - Planning & Review (Wed-Fri)	3573
Jan Sullivan	Senior Officer - Quality (Mon-Wed)	3573
Lynn Woodley	Executive Manager Strategic Planning & Quality	3360

Joining the SPQ team this year are:

- Jan Sullivan - who is well known for her achievements in academic policy development and, over recent years, in community engagement. Jan will focus on quality projects and the preparations for the AUQA audit.
- Joanne McCrea - who has recently moved from Perth where she worked with the WA Department of Fisheries. A marine biologist by qualification, Jo is very experienced in high-level planning and consultation. After experience that included managing the review and new plan for Rottnest Island, she is testing the different shoals and currents of the UOW planning processes.

The SPQ team reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Rob Castle.

The SPQ office is located in Room 202, Administration Building 36.



The SPQ team (from left) Jan Sullivan, Joanne McCrea, Lynn Woodley and Dale Dumbleton  
(Photographer Ellenie Petrou)

### Common Acronyms used in this Edition

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AUQF	Australian Universities Quality Forum
SPQ	Strategic Planning & Quality Office
UPAQ	University Planning & Quality Committee
UOW	University of Wollongong
UTAS	University of Tasmania