
FIVE-YEAR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEWS:
PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES
(Version 2: 16 November 2007)

1. BACKGROUND

The Working Party on the Evaluation of Learning and Teaching was established by the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) in June 2003 in response to the AUQA audit report. Its main objectives were to “review the University’s current mechanisms for assuring the quality of learning and teaching, and to incorporate existing and new approaches into a comprehensive evaluation framework for learning and teaching for adoption by the University”. An Evaluations Framework was developed and approved by Academic Board, addressing issues of planning, policy, student administration, human resources, finance, processes and management. This Framework identified components (ie key performance indicators, benchmarking, reviews of academic programs, and feedback and surveys) that need to be developed and embedded in learning and teaching policy and practice. As a consequence, the Learning and Teaching Working Party (LTWP) was established in July 2004. A subgroup of the LTWP addressed the issue of “developing a systematic, integrated and regular structure for the review of academic programs” and made recommendations on issues including: units of review (individual, double and combined degree programs); procedures; and the pro-formas and processes for the five-yearly reviews of programs. The recommendations of the Working Party were approved by the Vice-Chancellor’s Committee in November 2004 and by the Academic Board on 2 March 2005, and are now University policy.

The final report of the LTWP can be found at :<<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/opq/planning/ippf/>>.

The Principles and Procedures below will also be available on the Pro Vice-Chancellor’s website – see: <<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/pvclq/reviews>> in “Reviews – Five-Year Program Reviews”.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are a number of general principles that underpin the University’s approach to Program Reviews:

- The University is committed to the systematic review and evaluation of its activities, including its programs, as an integral part of the University’s quality assurance processes.
- Reviews are primarily directed towards addressing University priorities established in the context of its strategic direction, including in particular the quality of its academic programs. In this regard, the terms of reference of a review should be shaped to any particular issues that require attention and the membership of the review panel should be carefully selected to ensure it reflects the need for independent peer review and the involvement of key stakeholders.

- The review process should encourage and foster critical self-evaluation as part of a normal, continuous cycle of planning, monitoring and improvement. They are intended to be an integral part of a Faculty's own strategic planning and evaluation while simultaneously being an integral part of the University's quality assurance processes. To this end, local participation is to be encouraged through appropriate consultation on terms of reference, review panel membership, review processes, and other matters.
- The involvement of the senior management of the University in the review process is critically important, ranging from the initial stages of a review (terms of reference and panel membership); preparation for the review; involvement in the review panel visit; and consideration of its outcomes and subsequent implementation.
- Reviews must be conducted in a clear and orderly manner, with public and transparent processes, discussions and submissions being treated with discretion and confidentiality, and in a timely and responsive way and with regular evaluation of the review processes themselves.
- With regard to the schedule of program reviews, the schedule is based on 'natural' groupings of programs across related areas and level of study with regard also to minimising duplication and the additional workload on a Faculty, and to the timing of accreditation processes for professional programs. Whilst essentially cyclical in nature, the review schedule may be varied to take account of particular circumstances applying at a given time with the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality).

3. PROCEDURES

The following procedures for the conduct of the five-yearly program review cycle are based on those approved by the Committee of Executive Deans at its 19 April 2006 meeting, updated to reflect evolving practice:

a. Program groupings

Programs are assigned to logical groupings of similar programs to ensure that every program in the University may be reviewed within a five-year period.

b. The annual schedule

An annual schedule of reviews is to be developed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) and Executive Deans in preparation for the following year and provided to Academic Board for its noting prior to its last meeting for the year. As part of this process, draft terms of reference and panel members are to be proposed. The schedule, terms of reference and panel memberships are submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) for approval.

c. The review panel

Panel membership is restricted to three members (except with the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality)), comprising:

- The Convenor: a senior academic in the University of Professorial level who is outside the school/discipline of the program under review;
- One academic of at least Associate Professor level from outside the school(s)/discipline(s) that offer(s) the programs under review; and

- One external academic of Professorial level in the same or similar field to the programs under review, preferably from another institution highly regarded in that field.

International panel members can only be included if travel and accommodation costs are met by the Faculty.

Both industry/professional and student stakeholders are to be provided with the opportunity to make a submission to a review and be interviewed by the review panel.

Whilst the responsibility for approving the review panel composition and membership, as well as the terms of reference for the review, are the responsibility of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality), it is expected that Executive Deans will identify prospective review members and draft terms of reference for consideration and approval by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality).

d. Initial consultation

Limited and targeted invitations are sent to internal and external stakeholders to provide feedback and advice to the review panel. The relevant Faculty will determine this list with the involvement of the relevant area/areas of the Faculty.

e. Background information

The primary responsibility for the collection of background information will lie with the Faculty, primarily through the preparation of the Five-Year Program Review Report (a Word version for downloading can be found on the PVC (L&Q) web-site at: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/pvclq/reviews> in "Reviews – Five-Year Program Reviews"). The Quality and Reviews area is responsible for coordinating the process and collating the information.

f. Review panel visit

The panel meetings should cover not more than two days and two nights, with a dinner for the review panel on the evening of the first day, hosted by the Convenor. There will also usually be a dinner at the end of the first day hosted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) (or alternatively the Executive Dean of the relevant Faculty).

The holding of both entry and exit interviews will be decided on a case-by-case basis, but the normal expectation will be for the exit interview only to take place, with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) and other senior managers as appropriate.

Drafting of the report (in particular, deciding on the recommendations) should commence during the final session of the panel's schedule.

g. The review panel's report

The initial priority in drafting the review report is to finalise with the Convenor the set of draft recommendations in the week following the review visit. The draft recommendations and thrust of the report should not be discussed with the relevant Executive Dean or Head of School prior to the report being finalised and provided to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality).

The main body of a review report is to be very brief, and not more than ten pages. A first draft is to be provided to the Convenor of the Review Panel no later than the end of the third week after the Review Panel visit. The review report is to be provided to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality), who, in the normal course of events, will seek the relevant Executive Dean or

Deans initial advice on acceptance, rejection or modification of the recommendations prior to presentation of the review report to the Academic Board.

h. Second consultation

Except in exceptional circumstances and only with the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality), there is to be no second consultation inviting stakeholders to comment on the report's findings and recommendations.

i. Approval and implementation

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) is to present the report to Academic Board. The Board has the role of approving final recommendations to the extent that they fall within its terms of reference. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) has the responsibility for ensuring that an implementation plan relating the agreed recommendations is developed and progress monitored until implementation action is finalised. The first completed implementation plan is to be provided to the PVC(L&Q) within three months of the Academic Board's consideration with progress reports being made regularly thereafter until action is finalised. Copies of review reports, final recommendations, implementation plans and progress reports will be made available on the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality)'s website.

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