QUALITY IN TEACHING & LEARNING FRAMEWORK

and

CURRENT RISKS TO QUALITY

and

ACTION PLAN

13 September 2001
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Preface

Academic Board Resolution
The Academic Board required each of its subcommittees to develop policies in relation to establishing and maintaining standards objectives in their respective domains.

Academic Board Resolution 12/01
1. (a) the three committees of Academic Board work to describe and set a framework for academic standards, including
   a description of quality, within the scope of their terms of reference, in terms of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes
   the domains which should fall within the committee’s terms of reference, for example, staff qualifications, teaching methods and international operations
   their own terms of reference

   (b) the three committees recommend refinements to the existing mechanisms by which they
   monitor application of academic standards with reference to all modes and sites of delivery (domestic and off-shore)
   make recommendations for changes, both in policy and in implementation.

To this end, the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee (CTLC) has sought to create a framework that will establish and maintain quality in ECU teaching and learning together with associated academic standards. The domains of the framework are defined by the ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001 and these are used as an organising base for a set of principles. These principles identify various aspects of teaching and learning for which quality needs to be described and monitored.

Further work is required in two directions. Firstly there needs to be attention paid to the descriptions of quality “in terms of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes” (see AB12/01 above). Secondly there is a need to create a process to address “recommendations for changes, both in policy and in implementation”. This will result in an action list to be pursued systematically by CTLC. There is also a need to create an annual application of the “Plan-Do-Review-Improve” planning cycle to identify priority issues for policy formulation.

There are a number of issues known to CTLC that will be addressed. These include:
- a definition of quality teaching;
- a code of assessment;
- internationalisation of the curriculum.
Introduction to the Framework
Teaching and Learning is a core business of ECU and therefore the university is providing for the development of quality in teaching and learning. This framework comprises key principles relating to quality teaching and learning at ECU and a set of supporting statements and indicative mechanisms required to assure quality outcomes.

The framework must be seen as a living document that addresses the need for policy development in order to:
- improve the quality and standards of teaching and learning at ECU;
- respond to new initiatives and opportunities that arise from academic and pedagogical studies;
- respond to internal and external environmental factors such as government policy initiatives;
- proactively address risks to quality teaching and learning.

This framework must be seen as one component in a set of key ECU documents that define the university’s approach to delivering quality teaching and learning. Other key documents in the set are:
- Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001 and the related Academic Profile:
  - to define the objectives for ECU in its teaching and learning together the strategies and associated tasks necessary to achieve the objectives;
  - to extract a plan to be executed each year that progressively achieves the objectives.
- Guidelines for New Courses and the Course and Unit Approvals Procedures:
  - to define the quality assurance processes that are required in order for changes to courses and units to be approved.

Principles and Policies
The principles within the Quality in Teaching and Learning Framework (or simply the Framework) are the key elements upon which quality in teaching and learning will depend. They are intended to be a set of stable (or slowly evolving) and generally applicable propositions that should be valid in all teaching and learning activities.

Some of the supporting statements in this framework can be identified in the current set of higher education sector policies and principles for the provision of education by Australian Universities, whether in Australia or offshore. Within this sector, policies such as the Australian Qualification Framework (DETYA) and the AVCC codes of practice exist and are periodically reviewed. However, more detailed statements are necessary to set out the responsibilities and expectations that this University and its students can legitimately and fairly expect of each other. This framework defines the structure for such a set of statements.

Other supporting statements in this framework can be identified in the current set of Edith Cowan policies and guidelines. For instance, the Guidelines for New Courses is already in use. However, an Assessment Code does not exist and will need to be developed. It is necessary that all statements at the University level align with or derive from statements at the higher education level and that variation from them be identified and justified.
Standards and Risks

Some of these supporting statements will be a specification of expected academic standards whilst others will be codes of practice that mitigate the potential for failing to meet the standards. An underlying theme here is that there are always risks associated with quality in T&L – risks that quality will be compromised. The dimensions of this risk analysis are as follows:

1. Identification of the risks depends upon a clear statement of the academic standards in order to identify when a risk is being realised.
2. Mitigation of the risk can be achieved via establishing a code of practice that, if followed, should avoid or minimise the likelihood of the risk and its impact.
3. Monitoring of teaching and learning activities must be designed to ensure that standards are being met. The can be focused by monitoring high-risk areas deemed to be of a serious nature or with a potential for serious impact. Performance indicators (PIs) will need to be developed and monitored systematically.
4. The management of risks to quality lies with various academic managers who need relevant data in a fashion that allows timely and pertinent responses. Annual compilation of PIs or generation of complex Excel worksheets or Cognos cubes will not suffice and appropriate procedures will need to be developed.

Implementation

The framework will need a regular process of review and development. In line with the ECU Quality Framework, this process will need to close the feedback loop. This is to be realised in an annual sequence of actions with respect to teaching and learning:

1. Plan – formulating what we are trying to do
2. Do – implementing our plans
3. Review – monitoring and evaluating our processes and outcomes
4. Improve – making appropriate changes

This will require an annual process involving input from the faculties and service centres, decision-making and then action from the same parties.

The following section records university level principles and this is followed by three sections related to the objectives in the ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001, namely:

- Courses
- Teaching
- Learning
- Support/Context
ECU Responsibilities

Principle ECU 1. Recorded Policies and Practices
ECU will have clear, consistent, rational and understandable and accessible policies and practices underpinning the provision of all teaching and learning, regardless of:
- the basis on which those course are funded;
- site and mode of delivery – local, overseas, on-campus, offshore, on-line;
(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 1)

Principle ECU 2. Ownership and Maintenance
Academic Board will own and CTLC maintain this framework and its associated Policies, Standards and Codes of Practice, with the support of the Secretariat.

Principle ECU 3. Staff Responsibility
All staff involved in the delivery of the teaching and learning program are responsible for monitoring and maintaining academic quality standards.
- This responsibility is delegated from Academic Board via Executive Deans of Faculty, Heads of School, Course Coordinators and Unit Coordinators.
Courses

**Principle C1. Primacy of Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)**
The nature of ECU awards and the pathways to them shall generally recognise the AQF. Where the university has approved non-conforming awards, Academic Board shall
- define all levels of such awards;
- define the nature and pathways of students to such awards; and
- justify why we offer these at the University.
(Ref DVC Quality Circle 13/7/01)

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**Principle C2. Course Development and Approval**
ECU will ensure that all courses are developed to fulfill our mission and objectives for student learning as expressed in the ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan and related "Academic Profile". ECU will have mechanisms to review existing courses on a regular basis.
(Modified from AVCC 31/05/01 Attachment A, 2)

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<th>Course Development and Approval</th>
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Principle C3. Admission

ECU will select students by fair and open procedures with published criteria outlining access for all levels of candidacy. The principles upon which selection decisions are made will be stated clearly and adhered to by the University.

(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 3)

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Principle C4. Course Quality

1. ECU will have mechanisms that ensure that the quality of all courses onshore and offshore, is appropriately assured.
2. Where a course is offered in different locations or modes of delivery, the quality of the course, as reflected in outcomes, will be equivalent.

(Modified from University of Dundee Academic Standards Scheme AS6)

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<td>Current Risk</td>
<td>Admissions and Enrolments</td>
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Current Analysis of Risks to Quality - Admissions and Enrolments

1. Increase in the variety of admission pathways may lead to lowering of standards and pre-requisites for entry to University courses. If this leads to the lowering of exit outcomes then this will lead to a lowering of standards.

2. To increase the number of students entering a University course, there is a tendency for course coordinators to reduce pre-requisites for entry to the course.

3. An increased tendency for the standards of entry to University courses to be decided and administered by sections of the University separate from those responsible for teaching the course.

4. There is a need to ensure that entry standards are not compromised. All students should be expected to meet the same outcomes by the completion of their degree; however the pathway to achieving this may need to vary on occasions to allow students time for development.

5. Difficulties and delays experienced by students in gaining accurate up-to-date information on courses, units and enrolment, and an inability of students to enrol in a simple and timely manner.

6. With increased diversity in the student population, the English language entry standard may be below that needed for academic work. This can be a risk area, unless support is put in place for such students and staff are provided with the necessary skills to help with the development of academic English skills.

Proposed Action

- Establishment of Standards
- Integration of potential problems – Codes of Practice
- Monitoring
- Management

CTLC in consultation with LIFT will identify who is to take action to address these risks.
Learning

ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001

Objective 2. To create and facilitate a learning environment that produces graduates with the skills and attributes that fit them for their careers and life aspirations.

Principle L1. Teaching and Learning Environment
ECU will provide a suitable environment for teaching and learning in which student will be stimulated to reach their highest level of intellectual attainment. This environment will

- take account of the different characteristics of students and their varying cultural and education backgrounds;
- be a positive and cooperative one where students will have reasonable access to staff to discuss issues and problems and can expect fair, critical and helpful assessment and feedback on their academic work in a timely manner.

(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A)

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<th>T&amp;L Environment</th>
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Principle L2. Participation and Feedback
ECU will provide opportunities for students to participate in the functioning of the university at various levels and to provide feedback on the teaching and learning environment.

(Modified from University of Dundee Academic Standards Scheme AS4)

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**Principle L3. Flexible Learning**

1. Flexible learning is an educational approach that places primacy on the needs of learners both as individuals and as groups. Flexible learning incorporates a variety of student-centred teaching and learning methods, resources and administrative practices to create learning environments responsive to the needs of a diverse (with respect to culture, geographical location and lifestyle) student population, enabling them to achieve their goals of a university education. Flexibility applies to:
   - access to courses;
   - accommodating diverse student groups in a course;
   - the place, time and pace of study;
   - the form and pattern of interactions among learners and teachers; and
   - the type and variety of resources to support study and communication.

2. Courses will be designed to take account of the particular circumstances of learners and teachers, the requirements of the course of study and the available options for teaching and learning methods.

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Teaching

ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001
Objective 3. To maintain and further develop innovation and excellence in teaching that engages students in, motivates and facilitates effective learning.

Principle T1. Teaching Quality

1. The University will provide freedom for teachers to undertake self-motivated improvement activities.
2. University teachers will regularly monitor and evaluate their teaching quality to continuously improve upon their performance. This
   • involves collecting and interpreting relevant data from a variety of sources; and
   • reflecting critically on this information to identify strengths and weaknesses.

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Principle T2. Unit Transparency

Every unit coordinator should provide students with clear information as to the nature of the unit.

- Prospective students of a unit should be able to gain information from the public domain to inform their choice.
- Enrolled students in a unit should receive initial information that allows them to understand the expectations of the unit.
- Students of the unit will receive materials suited to the mode of instruction employed that will enable successful completion of the unit.

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<th>Unit Transparence</th>
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Principle T3. Assessment

1. The only criterion to be considered when assessing any student’s eventual success or otherwise in their course is their academic performance.
2. Where a unit is offered in different locations or via different modes of delivery, the standards for assessment outcomes will be comparable.
3. ECU will provide for appropriate dissemination of final assessment results to students within a reasonable time of completion of units.
4. ECU will provide students with a clear statement on the nature and unacceptability of academic dishonesty, including information on
   - cheating, plagiarism and fabrication or falsification of data, and
   - individual rights and responsibilities regarding the proper use of copyright materials.

(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 13-15)

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<td>Assessment Methods and Procedures</td>
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</table>
Current Risk Analysis - Roles and Responsibilities

1. Lack of clear roles and responsibilities of sessional staff, unit coordinators, course coordinators, Heads of School, etc. in administering and monitoring of policy and procedure compliance (e.g. re deferred assessment).
2. Course coordinators late in assigning unit coordinator duties to staff resulting in late availability of texts in the bookshop and students receiving class materials late.
3. The increased use of sessional staff and the multiplicity of modes and sites of delivery of units creates additional difficulties for a unit coordinator ensuring that the standard of the unit is identical/equivalent in all modes and at all sites.

Proposed Action
- Establishment of Standards
- Integration of potential problems – Codes of Practice
- Monitoring
- Management

Current Risk Analysis - Assessment Methods and Procedures

1. Lack of clarity and transparency of existing policy and procedures concerning plagiarism and cheating including the consequences of any breach.
2. Staff lack of awareness of methods of detecting and dealing effectively with incidents of plagiarism and cheating.
3. Lack of staff awareness of and compliance with existing policy and procedures concerning:
   - plagiarism on assignments;
   - late submission of assignments; and
   - cheating on examinations.
4. Lack of staff awareness of the attributes of a good quality test, assignment or examination.
5. Lack of clarity and transparency of procedures used in each unit to:
   - communicate assessment criteria to students;
   - assign marks in each test, assignment or examination;
   - provide each student with constructive and timely feedback on all work submitted;
   - guard against soft marking and grade inflation;
   - assign marks(%) and grades from a set of raw marks;
   - ensure parity between different modes of a unit where different assessment schedules are used;
   - ensure parity between University areas of scholarship, schools and faculties e.g. with respect to assessment grades and class of honours awarded;
6. Lack of clear procedures ensuring security for the transmission, storage, printing and general control of examination papers between being set by the unit coordinator and being read by students in examination rooms.

Proposed Action
- Establishment of Standards
- Integration of potential problems – Codes of Practice
- Monitoring
- Management

CTLC in consultation with LIFT will identify who is to take action to address these risks.
Support/Context – for students

### Principle SS1. Study and Student Life

1. ECU will endeavour to:
   - address the reasonable needs of all students regardless of gender, race or ethnicity, disability or impairment, socio-economic status or age;
   - provide an environment for students which is free from harassment and discrimination;
   - provide harmonious work and study environment in which concerns and complaints will be addressed and resolved as quickly as possible;

2. ECU will encourage the development a network of support for all students.

3. ECU will support student organisations as the university deems appropriate, within the legislative framework applying to the university and its administration.

   (Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 10-12)


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### Principle SS2. Available Information

1. Prospective students will have reasonable access to current and accurate information about available university courses, application and entry procedures, credit transfer policies and financial implications prior to the enrolment period.

2. Information in an appropriately accessible format about each unit will be made available to students in a timely manner.

3. At all times, students can expect the university to hold confidential all personal information, use it internally in accordance with confidentiality policy and to release it outside the university only with the consent and knowledge of the student or when legally obliged to do so.

   (Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A19, 21, 22)

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**Principle SS3. Appeals**
ECU will have an effective appeal mechanism which will provide students with an opportunity to review and to question formally their results and course standing.
(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 16-17)

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**Principle SS4. Grievances**
1. Student grievance that relate to academic standing and progress will be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily through a clear set of procedures.
2. ECU will have an effective mechanism for other types of grievances, complaints and feedback to the University, eg., Student Complaints Policy and Student Feedback Policy.

(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 16-17)

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Support/Context – for staff

Principle SA1. Adequate Teaching Resources
The university must ensure that all endorsed modes of instruction must be adequately resourced.
- Adequate staffing requires the deployment of sufficient skilled academic and support staff
- Face to face instruction requires provision of teaching facilities with convenient, uniform and modern instructional technology
- Print-based external studies require appropriate distribution and communication systems to allow effective external studies.
- Online instruction requires provision of necessary hardware and software as well as training in the use of online pedagogies

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Principle SA2. Staff Guidance and Support
The university will provide adequate guidance and support to all staff, academic and general, to ensure that they are equipped to fulfil the objectives of the Teaching and Learning Management Plan. Such support may include
- clarity of role definition;
- professional development opportunities.

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Support/Context – *university wide*

ECU Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2001
Objective 4. To maintain and enhance an effective and efficient context for teaching and learning.

**Principle SU1. Academic Standards Reporting Scheme**

1. The university will monitor academic standards with an efficient and effective reporting scheme.
2. Academic Board make an annual report to Council on academic standards being achieved at University and Faculty Levels based upon reports including:
   - monitoring by External bodies, eg. Professional Accreditation, AUQA;
   - Areas of Scholarship Reviews;
   - reports on the standards achieved in units that flow from unit level to course/school level through Faculty to AB;
   - quality audits conducted by LIFT in order to assure the validity of standards being achieved;
   - Boards of Examiners should report on their operations so as to inform the faculty of trends or factors that can be identified and considered.
   - Appeals processes should ensure that any aspects of teaching and learning that need attention are brought to the notice of the faculty concerned.

(Modified from University of Dundee Academic Standards Scheme AS2, 3, 9, 12)

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<tr>
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ECU will effectively review and maintain an Academic Standards Handbook
(Suggested from University of Dundee Academic Standards Scheme)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dissemination of Academic Standards Policy</th>
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Principle SU3. Maintenance of Alliances

In maintaining all alliances, the university will ensure that the quality of the academic, and academic support, services offered under the arrangement are comparable.
(Modified from AVCC 31/5/01 Attachment A, 6-9)

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<tr>
<td>Current Risk</td>
<td>International T&amp;L Framework</td>
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Current Risk Analysis - University Capacity to Learn from Experience

1. The lack of sharing across schools and across faculties of relevant information concerning incidents of plagiarism and cheating inhibits staff awareness of these risks and reduces the opportunities for developing effective methods of dealing with them.
2. The independence of the different stages of the University Appeals Procedures and the lack of exchange of relevant information about individual appeals prevent each faculty from learning effectively from the appeals of its students.

Proposed Action
- Establishment of Standards
- Integration of potential problems – Codes of Practice
- Monitoring
- Management

Current Risk Analysis – Inadequate Resource Allocation

The efficient and effective use of resources for T&L is essential to ensure that quality of T&L is at an optimum level. This requires that the allocation of resources to T&L conforms to best practice.

Proposed Action
- Establishment of Standards
- Integration of potential problems – Codes of Practice
- Monitoring
- Management

CTLC in consultation with LIFT will identify who is to take action to address these risks.

Reference

Category: Academic Affairs
Policy Code: File Number:
Originator: Dr Jim Millar
Approved By: Academic Board (AB 72/01)
Date Approved: 13 September 2001
Revision Date: Amendments:
Related: