Course and Subject Quality Assurance and Review Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This procedure supports the Course and Subject Policy by stating detailed requirements for quality assurance and review of courses and subjects.

Scope

(2) This procedure applies to all academic staff, and to any non-academic staff involved in the design, delivery and review of courses and subjects.

(3) The Course and Subject Life Cycle Procedure states requirements in relation to external advisory committees, which play a part in comprehensive course reviews and may advise on improvements to courses following annual course health checks.

(4) The Assessment Policy and Assessment - Conduct of Coursework Assessment and Examinations Procedure state requirements for moderation of assessment in subjects and other arrangements to ensure consistency and fairness of assessment.

(5) The Assessment - Research Components of Coursework Courses Procedure lists practices to ensure a high quality of supervision of students in research component subjects.

References

(6) Where a supporting document is referenced in this procedure, it will be listed in the associated information tab.

Section 2 - Glossary

(7) Most terms used in this procedure are defined in the glossary section of the Course and Subject Policy.

(8) For the purposes of this procedure, the term 'progression' means students' academic performance as determined by their successful completion of subjects.

Section 3 - Policy

(9) This procedure supports the Course and Subject Policy and should be read alongside that policy.

Section 4 - Procedure

Annual course health check

(10) The Course and Subject Policy states that the Executive Dean of the faculty that manages a course must ensure it

undergoes an annual course health check.

(11) Annual course health checks ensure regular monitoring of course quality, viability and relevance between comprehensive course reviews. These health checks will identify course improvement actions needed, and records of these health checks will inform comprehensive reviews.

(12) For each course, the Office of Planning and Analytics will provide an online data pack with performance criteria, data measures and performance tags against the measures.

(13) Courses will be assigned a depth of annual review based on their performance in the diagnostic data measures compared to benchmarks. The measures will include data from the past five years on:

    a. student load;
    b. first year attrition;
    c. progress rate (first year and total);
    d. completion rates;
    e. student feedback;
    f. financial viability data; and
    g. marketing data.
Where possible, sector-wide benchmarks will be included.

(14) Each data measure will receive a green (favourable performance) or red (unfavourable performance) tag depending on whether they meet or fall below specified thresholds. The proportion of green to red tags will be used to decide the depth of review.

(15) The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will decide the thresholds and green/red proportion ranges for a given year, in consultation with faculties and relevant central divisions.

(16) The Division of Learning and Teaching will support faculties in:

    a. interpreting the data;
    b. compiling the review report; and
    c. developing solutions to issues identified in review.

(17) The Executive Dean or the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may change the initially assigned level of depth of health check of any course.

(18) The Associate Dean (Academic) will coordinate the faculty's annual course performance review work, which the Course Directors will carry out, in collaboration with Heads of School and others.

(19) Each annual course health check will be submitted for endorsement to the relevant school and faculty committees, before it is brought for approval to the Faculty Board.

(20) Once the report has been approved, any improvements to the course that it identifies as needed will be added to the faculty improvement plan.

(21) Where the outcome of an annual course health check is that the course must make a case for continuing to be offered, one or more workshops will be held with the course's external advisory committee to identify how it can better meet the needs of its market.

(22) The faculty will report to University Courses Committee (for coursework courses) or University Research Committee (for higher degree by research courses) on progress with the improvement actions arising from annual

course health checks, by providing the updated faculty improvement plan.

(23) The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will each year review the process for annual course health checks, and criteria for depth of health check, in consultation with faculties.

Other course quality assurance activities

(24) Academic staff are expected to undertake other course quality assurance activities beyond the requirements of the annual course health check, including:

   a. assessment moderation (see the Assessment - Conduct of Coursework Assessment and Examinations Procedure);
   b. checking of subject outlines before each subject delivery (see the subject quality assurance section below);
   c. benchmarking (see the benchmarking section below);
   d. activities related to student feedback and course data analysis; and
   e. activities related to the external advisory committee (see the Course and Subject Life Cycle Procedure).

(25) Where such activities lead to findings that the course needs improving, the Course Director is expected to lead development of and propose improvements, to ensure that the course:

   a. maintains a high standard and delivers an excellent learning experience; and
   b. is well positioned for its next comprehensive review.

Comprehensive course review.

(26) The Course and Subject Policy requires the Executive Dean of the faculty that manages a course to ensure it undergoes a comprehensive course review (CCR) within seven years following its initial approval or the most recent CCR and reaccreditation of the course. To achieve this:

   a. the CCR will begin within five calendar years after the previous University Courses Committee reaccreditation decision; and
   b. the faculty will provide the CCR report to University Courses Committee (for a coursework course) or University Research Committee (for a higher degree by research course) within six calendar years after the previous reaccreditation decision.

(27) The faculty that manages the course will facilitate its CCR and cover any costs associated with it.

(28) The Course Director, or another senior academic staff member nominated by the Executive Dean, will lead preparation of the CCR report to (as relevant) the Faculty Courses Committee or Faculty Research Committee which will decide the CCR recommendation to (as relevant) University Courses Committee or University Research Committee.

(29) CCR will consider how the course fits with University and faculty strategy, research and scholarship strengths and how well it is competing with similar courses at other institutions.

(30) To gain a detailed understanding of students' experience of the course and ideas on how the course can be improved, CCRs will be informed by consultation with current students in the course in the form of:

   a. focus groups or individual student interviews; and/or
   b. a survey designed for the purpose.

(31) CCRs will be informed by, at a minimum, the following external sources of information about the course:

a. results of benchmarking with similar courses at other Australian universities of:
   i. student performance (including attrition, progression, completions) by sessions, entry pathways, location of study including third party deliveries, study mode and student achievement; and
   ii. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected subjects in the course;
b. a review by a senior academic leading or teaching in a similar course at another tertiary education institution, of the curriculum and the course's annual course performance review reports since its previous reaccreditation; and
c. a workshop of the external advisory committee.
d. Where a course has undergone an external professional reaccreditation process within two years before the date of submission of the CCR report to University Courses Committee, this meets the requirements in subclauses b. and c. above, but not the requirement in subclause a.

(32) CCR will include developing an action plan to address any issues with the course identified by the review.

(33) When the CCR report has been endorsed by (as relevant) the Faculty Courses Committee or Faculty Research Committee, the Deputy Dean or Executive Dean will submit the CCR report to (as relevant) University Courses Committee or University Research Committee. The report will make one of the following recommendations to the committee:

a. renew accreditation of the course without conditions;
b. renew accreditation of the course with recommended changes;
c. renew accreditation with required changes;
d. suspend intakes to the course for [specified period]; or
e. phase out the course after [specified period] during which intakes will be suspended.

(34) The faculty and (as relevant) University Courses Committee or University Research Committee will receive reports of progress with any required actions and/or recommended actions as part of the updated faculty improvement report.

(35) The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will maintain a schedule of all courses and their due dates for comprehensive course review, in collaboration with Executive Deans.

Academic quality assurance of courses involving third parties

(36) University Learning and Teaching Committee oversees and coordinates faculties' quality assurance of courses delivered with third parties.

(37) For these courses, faculties, in collaboration with administrative divisions, will have mechanisms to ensure the ongoing:

a. effectiveness of teaching materials and strategies to achieve the subject and course learning outcomes;
b. quality of teaching;
c. quality and integrity of assessment including all processes involved in assessment;
d. provision of support services, availability of learning resources (IT, library), and quality of facilities; and
e. effectiveness of processes for student feedback and responsiveness to student feedback.

(38) The teaching faculty or (as relevant) the Office of Global Engagement and Partnerships will ensure that any issue with any of the above is addressed promptly.

(39) The formal agreement between the University and the third party will detail:

a. the expectations of all parties concerning course provisions;

b. the responsibilities of the third party, faculty and administrative and support areas for operation of the course; and

c. the minimum requirements for quality assurance of the course on the part of the third party, the faculty, relevant academic committees and, where appropriate, other units of the University.

(40) Faculty Boards will report annually to University Learning and Teaching Committee on academic quality in partnered deliveries.

(41) University Learning and Teaching Committee will provide a consolidated annual report on academic quality in partnered deliveries to Academic Senate.

Benchmarking

(42) Faculties, in collaboration with the divisions, will benchmark courses against similar courses offered by other higher education providers, in order to improve them and ensure course learning outcomes are equivalent.

(43) Comprehensive course review must include benchmarking of student cohorts' success against comparable courses of study: the section on comprehensive course review above specifies the aspects that this benchmarking must include.

(44) The Executive Dean or their nominee (such as a Head of School or Course Director) will oversee any benchmarking activity; the Division of Learning and Teaching provides advice on these activities.

(45) Benchmarking involves:

a. comparing similar learning and teaching tasks, processes and their outcomes; and

b. setting goals for improvement, and prioritising areas for change and resources for these, based on the evidence.

(46) Each benchmarking activity will be funded by the area responsible for the course (the faculty) or subject (the school).

(47) In arranging benchmarking, faculties will define the expected outcomes in consultation with the benchmarking partner.

Planning benchmarking

(48) For each benchmarking activity, the relevant Executive Dean will submit a plan to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for approval. The plan will include:

a. purpose/aims of the activity and expected outcomes;

b. scope of the project (what will be benchmarked/measured, what performance indicators will be compared);

c. how data will be validated to ensure data from both partners is comparable;

d. timeline of the project;

e. who will coordinate the project and liaise with the partner, who else will be involved in the project and what the responsibilities of each participant will be;

f. methods to be used (e.g. questionnaire, interviews, workshops);

g. communication plan; and

h. processes for approval, reporting and follow-up.

Selecting benchmarking partners

(49) In selecting benchmarking partners faculties should prefer partners who:

a. are recognised leaders in the area to be benchmarked; and/or

b. share similar problems, outcomes or practices, so that both institutions learn from the exercise; and/or

c. are similar in at least some of: size, disciplines taught, research/teaching emphasis, age of institution, multi-campus operation.

(50) Faculties will ensure there is a written agreement with the benchmarking partner to document understandings about confidentiality, use of information, intellectual property rights, and the scope of the benchmarking exercise.

(51) The written agreement must be reviewed by Legal Services and signed by a school or faculty leader at Associate Head of School level or above.

Information sharing in benchmarking

(52) Faculties should ensure, in planning the benchmarking activity with the partner, that each will share a similar set of information in terms of type, level and quantity.

(53) Faculties will ensure that they and the benchmarking partner treat information shared with one another for the benchmarking activities as follows:

a. The information is confidential and can only be published with the express consent of all parties to the benchmarking exercise.

b. The information will only be used for the purpose for which it was shared, unless all parties to the benchmarking exercise agree to it being used for another purpose.

Reporting benchmarking

(54) Faculties will report all benchmarking activities to Academic Senate via University Learning and Teaching Committee and via the relevant school and faculty committees, namely:

a. School and Faculty Assessment Committees, for benchmarking of assessment; or

b. the relevant School Board and the Faculty Board, for benchmarking of subjects or courses.

(55) The content of benchmarking reports will vary depending on the scale and focus of the activity, but should at a minimum include:

a. an overview of the activity and expected outcomes;

b. discussion of examples of good practice;

c. an overview of findings;

d. recommendations for improving practices, processes and/or outcomes in the area benchmarked;

e. a cost-benefit analysis of any significant changes proposed (such as changes to delivery mode, entry requirements; or to assessment practices, such as introducing workplace learning components); and

f. an action plan for implementing recommendations with timelines.

Quality assurance of subjects

(56) The [Assessment - Conduct of Coursework Assessment and Examinations Procedure](#) states requirements for moderation of assessment in each delivery of each subject.

Pre-session check of subject outlines

(57) The school will ensure that subject outlines are checked for completeness and correctness before each teaching session. The subject outline tool is used for this purpose. See the [Course and Subject Information Procedure](#) for what information a subject outline must provide.

Subject reflection

(58) The subject convenor will lead the subject teaching team in reflection on the subject after each session in which it is offered. This reflection will consider, at a minimum:

   a. the grades distribution and pass rate for each offering of the subject during the session, and a comparison of these;
   b. student feedback on the subject for the session, including subject experience survey data;
   c. the subject team's performance in returning students' submitted assessment work by the expected dates; and
   d. whether the subject outline was published on time.

(59) The subject team will provide a report of the subject reflection to the School Assessment Committee.

(60) The School Assessment Committee will provide the following reports of the school's subject reflections for a session:

   a. to the Faculty Assessment Committee, a list of actions arising from the reflections and progress on completing actions from subject reflections in previous sessions; and
   b. to the Faculty Board, a summary report of the reflections.

(61) The Faculty Board will provide a report of subject reflections to University Learning and Teaching Committee after each of Australian session 1, session 2 and session 3. These reports will comprise subject reflections for any session that has ended since the previous report.

Subject offering viability review

(62) Heads of School, in consultation with Course Directors, will review regularly the campus offerings of each subject in order to keep to a minimum the number of uneconomical offerings of the same subject over the teaching year.

Subject experience survey

(63) Students are encouraged to complete the subject experience survey (SuES) but are not required to complete it.

(64) Academic staff will encourage students in their classes to participate in the SuES, but must not apply pressure to students to complete it or offer incentives for them to complete it.

Management of the survey

(65) The following units share management of the subject experience survey (SuES):

   a. The Office of Planning and Analytics (OPA) administers the survey, in consultation with the Division of Information Technology (DIT).
   b. The Division of Learning and Teaching leads annual review of the survey with faculties, DIT, Division of Library Services, Division of Student Success and OPA.

(66) The OPA will publish a schedule of SuES administration dates for all sessions in each calendar year, at the start of that year.

(67) The SuES will open for Subject Coordinators to select optional questions at least one week after the census date of the relevant session. Staff can add optional questions until the survey is opened for students to respond.

(68) Subject Coordinators may request access, and may be directed to request access, for other staff to add optional questions using the online form for this purpose.

(69) The SuES will open for students to respond three weeks before the end-date of the relevant session, and the SuES system will notify students of this by email.

(70) To ensure student grade release does not influence survey outcomes, the SuES will be closed to student responses:

    a. for workplace learning placement subjects, 26 weeks after the end-date of the relevant session; or
    b. for all other subjects, one week after the end-date of the relevant session; unless
    c. the subject has a residential school after the end of the session, in which case the SuES should be closed one week after the end of the residential school.

Core and optional questions

(71) The subject experience survey (SuES) comprises:

    a. core questions that must be asked for each subject offering; and
    b. optional questions, which Subject Coordinators or other authorised staff can select to be asked in a subject offering.

(72) There are three sets of standard core questions:

    a. one for workplace learning (WPL) placement subjects;
    b. one for Study Link subjects; and
    c. one for all other subjects.

(73) No more than five optional questions may be selected for a subject offering, unless the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), or nominee, permits an exception.

(74) Academic staff can ask for questions to be added to the optional questions bank by the following process:

    a. The academic staff member submits the request to their Head of School for endorsement. The request should:
        i. explain why the questions are needed; and
        ii. indicate that the requester has searched the optional questions bank but has not found questions that would meet this need.
    b. If the Head of School endorses the request, they forward it to the Director, Planning and Analytics.
    c. The Director, Planning and Analytics, in consultation with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), decides whether the requested questions will be added. The criteria for this decision are:
        i. whether the questions are distinct from existing questions; and
        ii. whether the questions will be sufficiently relevant to other subjects.

Survey participation

(75) While the subject experience survey is open for student responses, the Subject Coordinator will have access to view the number of student responses to date, but not to identify students who have or have not responded.

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Student de-identification and exceptions to this

(76) The Office of Planning and Analytics will de-identify students' responses before providing the data for the uses set out below.

(77) Identified students' responses will, however, be provided in the following exceptional circumstances:

a. Where the law requires the University to provide the identified data to an external authority, it will do so.
b. Where a student's comments indicate a risk to the student's safety or wellbeing, or to the safety of another person, the identified response will be shared with staff of the University who need to know in order to reduce the risk.
c. Where a student's comments may constitute misconduct as defined by the Student Misconduct Rule (for example, where they may constitute harassment or discrimination), the identified comments may be included in a report of alleged student misconduct by the process set out in the Student Misconduct Rule.

Use of data and minimum response threshold for publication

(78) The Subject Coordinator and head of the teaching school will be provided with the subject experience survey response data for each subject offering through the subject evaluation software platform.

a. This data will include aggregated question response data for all core questions (including those on individual teaching staff) and students' comments for the subject offering, even where the response rate is below the minimum number for publication.

(79) The Subject Coordinator will normally share the response data and comments with the subject teaching team.

a. Where, however, students' comments on a staff member are potentially embarrassing to the staff member or otherwise sensitive, the Subject Coordinator should seek the advice of the Head of School before sharing those comments with the teaching team or only with the staff member in question.

(80) The Office of Planning and Analytics may, where the Executive Dean of the relevant faculty approves the request, provide:

a. aggregated question response data for optional questions, and/or students' comments on any questions, to other staff; and/or
b. SuES data reports outside the normal reporting dates.

(81) Where five or more students in a subject offering respond to the SuES, the aggregated core question response data for the subject will be published to all students and staff via the student portal.

a. This data will be published after grades have been uploaded to Banner for the relevant session.
b. Students' comments will not be published.

(82) The Office of Planning and Analytics will make aggregated question response data for all questions available to University staff involved with design and teaching of courses and subjects, including course directors, associate deans, sub-deans, librarians, course review panels, academic skills advisors and educational designers.

Percentage positive result measure

(83) The primary indicator of student satisfaction with subjects as measured by subject experience survey data will be the percentage positive result. This figure is the percentage of the total responses to core questions for which students select a rating of 4 or 5 on the five-point response scale.

Information for students on improvements

(84) For each subject, the Subject Coordinator will in the subject outline:

- a. acknowledge and summarise student feedback received to date; and
- b. indicate what actions have been taken to address students' concerns or explain why no action was considered necessary.

Section 5 - Guidelines

(85) Nil.

Status and Details

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