

# **CHARLES STURT**

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## **U N I V E R S I T Y**



# **Charles Sturt University**

## **Office of Academic Governance**

### **2008 Operational Plan**

#### **Statement of Context**

As a section focused on (academic) governance, the Office of Academic Governance is primarily an enabler of activities elsewhere in the University. These other activities normally have a much greater visibility than the Office of Academic Governance work that enables them – it is one of the key roles of the Office of Academic Governance to facilitate due process and therefore efficiency in decision making. It also provides an official, auditable record of these processes, and the decisions that flow from them.

CSU is also currently reviewing the role of the Academic Senate, with an eye to the second round of AUQA audits. Much of the planning in the Office of Academic Governance is heavily dependent on the outcome of this activity.

<b>Key Objective 1: Support of the CSU Course Plan</b>	
<b>Link to Course Plan</b>	<b>Context / planned outcomes</b>
All Objectives	<p>historic performance / proposed actions / expected outcomes (targets or deliverables) / timeline [Associated Risks]</p> <p>Facilitate decision making by maintaining a flexible, transparent and auditable set of processes, policies and documentation surrounding course planning. Continue to refine planning processes to maintain a proper balance between strategic activity, collegial quality assurance and accountability.</p> <p>Specific outcomes will include: a revised set of procedures and systems (e.g. CASIMS) to better differentiate between administrative and academic concerns, and improve the quality and reliability of data; even greater flexibility in planning, without diminishing quality outcomes, largely via a more sophisticated appreciation of workflows required for different types of course change; and a more integrated process incorporating governance, and Divisional and Faculty planning. (By 2009.)</p> <p>Significant progress has occurred in the past 2-3 years in refining CSU course planning processes, including a newly constituted UCPC with Divisional input, streamlined documentation, and greater administrative support for the tracking of approvals.</p> <p>Risks include a framework that is not responsive to market or institutional need, and which would diminish the quality of decisions. There is also significant risk of dissociation between the inherently collegial mechanisms of academic quality assurance, and the more managerial strategic planning activities of the University, in the courses area.</p>
Academic Senate responsibilities	<p>Administer Academic Senate responsibilities in the course plan. Assist in the alignment of academic quality assurance and standards activities and management activity in course planning.</p> <p>Pending review of the role of the Academic Senate at CSU, the Office of Academic Governance will (by 2009) have reviewed its governance role to determine if it can better support the integration of governance with management.</p> <p>Risks include: a continued reliance upon Academic Senate for setting and monitoring academic standards, but within a framework where the Senate has effectively no authority over or role within operational activity; and a mistaking of management as governance.</p>
Improve demand from well qualified students	<p>Continue to work with TAFE to improve pathways via streamlined processes, including an institutional self-assessment against good practice credit principles in 2007/8.</p> <p>Develop a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy for CSU, by 2009, in conjunction with the Academic Programs Committee.</p>
Emphasis upon quality	<p>Course quality is fundamentally dependent upon collegial quality assurance processes, as academic 'quality' is heavily based upon peer-review. See above for marrying this sort of collegial</p>


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mechanism with more strategic/management mechanisms.

Benchmarking is an activity that CSU has traditionally not engaged with in a substantive way, in academic activities, outside discipline peer-review. The Office of Academic Governance will support CSU in its preparation for AUQA auditing in 2009, including in the consideration of benchmarking practices, and the integration of these within existing policies and practices.

Current risks to course quality that are within the sphere of the Office of Academic Governance operation include a culture of course planning and approval that is often just-in-time, and not properly integrated with course delivery (see above). Additionally 'flagship' courses such as veterinary science, dentistry and optometry seem increasingly to be developed outside of existing planning and approval mechanisms.

<b>Key Objective 2: Support of the CSU Research Plan</b>	
<b>Link to Research Plan</b>	<b>Context / planned outcomes</b> historic performance / proposed actions / expected outcomes (targets or deliverables) / timeline [Associated Risks]
All objectives	<p>Facilitate decision making by maintaining a flexible, transparent and auditable set of processes, policies and documentation surrounding research committees such as the RPC, BOGS and Faculty research committees.</p> <p>Focus the activity of Faculty-based research committees upon CSU strategic research direction (by 2009). Historically these committees have had widely (wildly) varying functions, with little consistency between Faculties and often no wider strategic focus.</p>
Integrated planning	<p>Provide a consistency of approach to the RPS and UCPC, which have a shared membership. Ensure issues which impact on both committees are discussed by both committees.</p> <p>Continue to develop enhanced communication mechanisms for these committees. (By 2009.)</p>

<b>Key Objective 3: Support of the CSU Learning and Teaching Plan</b>	
<b>Link to Learning and Teaching Plan</b>	<b>Context / planned outcomes</b> historic performance / proposed actions / expected outcomes (targets or deliverables) / timeline [Associated Risks]
Subject Reduction	<p>The Office of Academic Governance has worked together with Student Administration to implement subject reduction procedures.</p> <p>It is further proposed to incorporate inactive subjects in the subject planning and approval stages, to prevent re-use of subjects and close the loop on processes. (By 2009.) This is also a risk management initiative, to prevent subject numbers increasing again over time.</p>
1.2 – strengthened support in leadership of learning and teaching	<p>The Learning and Teaching Committee of Academic Senate is still relatively new. It is proposed to continue to strengthen support for this committee, and to align it more closely with the UCPC, RPC and APC (by 2009).</p> <p>Risks are mainly in the appropriate governance of learning and teaching activity, as well as in communication surrounding these processes.</p>
1.8 – course architecture project	Continue to provide high-level advice on the implementation of the revised course architecture. (By 2009, if project continues.)
2.5 – Indigenous Education Strategy, Western Regions Strategy, International Education Strategy	Provide administrative and advisory support to the development and implementation of these strategies.
2.8 – Session Calendar Project (USM)	Contribute to project via Steering Committee membership.
Governance	<p>Act as high level advisory body for Academic Senate policy. Develop comparative facility for policy across the sector. (By 2010.)</p> <p>Undertake wide-ranging review of Academic Senate policy in conjunction with review of the operation and role of the Senate. (By 2009.)</p>

<b>Key Objective 4: Support of the Institutional Development Plan</b>	
<b>Link to Institutional Development Plan</b>	<b>Context / planned outcomes</b> historic performance / proposed actions / expected outcomes (targets or deliverables) / timeline [Associated Risks]
Service Culture	<p>Continue to incorporate feedback mechanisms within key Office of Academic Governance processes. (By 2009.)</p> <p>Continue to participate in WPI and WPP processes.</p> <p>Finalise mapping of course and subject processes across the University. (2008.)</p> <p>Develop a clearer understanding within the University of the role of the Academic Senate and Office of Academic Governance. (Ongoing.) Risks include the continued confusion surrounding academic quality and Senate accountability and authority.</p>
Workforce planning	<p>Participate in workforce planning. Particular emphasis upon succession planning at the leadership level. (By 2009.)</p> <p>It is difficult to undertake this task meaningfully while CSU does not have a clear sense of what it expects of its Academic Senate, as the Office of Academic Governance effectively functions as the administrative arm of the Senate.</p>
Organisational culture	<p>Continue to elaborate upon and strengthen collegial governance as a more effective methodology for decisions. Trial new processes for 'collective' decision-making that go beyond committees. (By 2010.)</p> <p>Significantly enhance internal communication channels around academic governance, with review of the role of the Academic Senate. (By 2009.) Change name of section to reflect the governance role (by 2008).</p> <p>Risks include a fragmentation of decision-making and delegated authority. This creates inefficiencies in overlapping and conflicting activity in the same areas, across the University, such as the creation of forums with no clear delegation, which cut across existing governance processes.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Continue to operate with budget surpluses.</p> <p>Reduce resource use by continuing to increase utilisation of online and other electronic technologies (electronic agendas, online appeals workflows, online policy instruments). (Further developed by 2010.)</p>