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Background

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) conducted its Quality Audit of Charles Sturt University (CSU) during 2004. As detailed in the AUQA Audit Manual, the Audit sought to determine '*whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve objectives*'. The Audit outcomes were presented in AUQA's *Report of an Audit of Charles Sturt University, November 2004* ('the Audit Report'), which documented the Audit Panel's perceptions of CSU based upon:

- CSU's self assessment (the Performance Portfolio) and additional supplementary material; and
- interviews, discussion and observation during the Audit Visit to CSU's Wagga Wagga Campus and in addition, visits to a number of CSU's onshore and offshore 'partners'.

The Audit Report includes:

- Commendations, relating to areas where AUQA commended the practices of CSU;
- Affirmations, where AUQA affirmed actions already identified by CSU in bringing about improvement; and
- Recommendations, where AUQA recommends improvements to current practice.

Subsequent to the release of the Audit Report, AUQA invited CSU to submit entries in relation to Commendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 11 from the Audit Report for inclusion in AUQA's Good Practice Database.

Introduction

This report outlines the progress that CSU has made in relation to AUQA's Recommendations and Affirmations. This progress should be considered in the context of broader developments at CSU since the Audit, as CSU has continued to secure its future in the highly fluid Australian higher education environment. At the highest level these developments include:

- the update of the University's Strategic Plan (University Strategy 2007-2011), with the expectation of providing greater focus on institutional performance in key areas;
- a revised planning framework, incorporating 5 year University Plans relating to 'Courses', 'Research', 'Learning and Teaching' and 'Institutional Development', underpinning the University Strategy and linking to Faculty and Divisional Operational Plans;

- enhanced processes to monitor performance, including the better integration of planning, risk management and budget development, as the basis for pursuing continuous improvement of outcomes; and
- a major reformation of the University's faculty structure.

Further Information

AUQA's Audit Manual (Version 2.1) can be found at <http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/auditmanuals/index.shtml>

CSU's Performance Portfolio can be found at http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/auqa_audit/

AUQA's Report of an Audit of Charles Sturt University, November 2004 can be found at http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai_reports/index.shtml

AUQA's Good Practice Database can be found at <http://www.auqa.edu.au/gp/index.php>

CSU's University Strategy 2007-2011 and Users Guide to the Strategic Plan can be found at http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/strategic_planning/

This Progress Report can be found at http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/progress_report/

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Commendations

AUQA made eleven Commendations in its *Report of an Audit of Charles Sturt University*. The University is pleased to have been invited to contribute to the AUQA Good Practice Database in relation to the Commendations denoted with asterix (*) below.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends CSU for the manner in which it has been able to establish the concept of 'One University' strongly amongst its staff while operating across physically distributed locations and campuses.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 9

Commendation 2

AUQA commends the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellor for their visibility, accessibility and responsiveness towards staff which many staff highly value.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 11

Commendation 3*

AUQA commends CSU for the establishment of various fora that allow for effective discussion and information sharing across the University and help foster an understanding amongst staff of operating as 'One University'.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 11

Commendation 4*

AUQA commends the CSU Council for its responsible approach to corporate governance, especially as demonstrated by its adoption of The Charter of Corporate Governance.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 12

Commendation 5*

AUQA commends the Division of Student Services for the proactive approach it has taken to identifying students at risk and connecting these students to CSU's various student support systems.

Learning and Teaching, page 28

Commendation 6*

AUQA commends CSU for the manner in which it has targeted research funding to areas in which it will produce the maximum effect and at the same time generally encouraged broadening of a research culture. The 'community of scholars' concept, in particular, is supporting the research interests of early career and emerging researchers in a most positive way.

Research and Research Training, page 31

Commendation 7

AUQA commends CSU for the improving trend in most of its research output measures, albeit from a low base.

Research and Research Training, page 33

Commendation 8*

AUQA commends CSU for the manner in which it has whole-heartedly embraced its commitment to regional communities and for a clear desire to improve and extend relationships with communities, for mutual benefit.

Regional Engagement, page 37

Commendation 9*

AUQA commends CSU's Division of Student Services for its ongoing efforts to ensure the services it provides are student centered.

Resource Management and Generation, page 47

Commendation 10

AUQA commends the customer service orientation of CSU's library staff across all campuses.

Resource Management and Generation, page 47

Commendation 11*

AUQA commends CSU for the development of its Leadership and Management Development Framework, which should strengthen the ability of the University to recruit to leadership positions in the future.

Human Resources, page 51

Recommendations and Affirmations

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that in responding to cross-portfolio issues the University has identified as fundamentally important to the institution, CSU management assign responsibility for formulating and implementing a co-ordinated strategy to address each issue including guiding the various elements of the University in the roles they are expected to play in the solution.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 12

In making this Recommendation, the Audit Panel identified certain University wide issues where it considered there to be scope for a *'better coordinated response (that) would allow all areas within the University to take ownership'*. Issues such as *'reducing student attrition'* (see Commendation 5), *'progressing acceptance and use of the online environment'* (see Affirmation 4) and *'progressing the international strategy'* (see Recommendation 15) were seen as areas requiring a *'well- considered and co-ordinated University-wide response'* (p.12).

CSU management understands the challenges posed by 'cross-portfolio issues' in a large and complex institution and considers these to be best addressed through the accountabilities inherent in its management and committee structures. These structures are augmented when necessary by the formation of working parties to conduct specific projects, approached using project management principles and utilising staff from relevant areas.

The University's management structure at the time of the Audit provided coverage of the full scope of University activities, identified clear accountability lines leading to senior management, the Vice-Chancellor and Council and was formalised through the Performance Management process. Notwithstanding this, the University's management structure has been reviewed (February 2006) with the terms of reference including 'the coordination of services and response to cross-portfolio issues', in response to AUQA's Recommendation 1.

In reference to this AUQA Recommendation in particular, the review resulted in the reformation of CSU's International Office into 'CSU International' (CSUI) and subsequently the Office of International Relations (OIR). OIR was created in July 2006 and will provide focused business planning, relationship management and support for transnational education projects. OIR is now located in the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) which will facilitate an effective approach to cross-portfolio issues. In addition, the responsibility for international student admissions has been moved within the portfolio of the Division of Student Administration, mainstreaming this activity.

In further recognition of the challenges presented by issues that span portfolios, and the particular situations identified by AUQA, the University has:

- from October 2005 reconvened the International Strategy Committee (ISC), to provide clearer approval pathways for Transnational Education (TNE) activities (Presiding Officer - DVC (Academic));
- from August 2006 constituted the ISC as a sub-committee of the University Course Planning Committee (UCPC), ensuring that consideration of resourcing

aspects of proposed international activities is mainstreamed and that cross-portfolio matters are worked through. (The UCPC has also been reconstituted to allow comprehensive representation from Divisions as well as Faculties);

- used the Vice-Chancellor's Forum to monitor cross-portfolio issues;
- determined to attend to cross-portfolio issues and more closely monitor performance in these areas as part of its annual planning and review cycle;
- established the practice of assigning responsibility for initiatives identified as having cross-portfolio scope to a member or members of the Senior Executive Group (SEG) (or relevant committees), for example, responsibility for each of the four new University Plans for 'Courses', 'Research', 'Learning and Teaching' and 'Institutional Development'; and
- From 2005 CSU has adopted a project management model and established a Project Service Centre. A major aim of the model is to ensure a consistent and integrated approach to organisational change and development.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that a more formal approach to the identification, assessment and management of corporate and operational risk is required, as demonstrated by its adoption in March 2004 of the Policy on Risk Management.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 13

At the time of the Audit, CSU was in the early stages of implementing a newly approved Risk Management Policy. The Audit Panel encountered varied degrees of understanding of risk management and therefore suggested that good practice be identified and shared across sections. The Audit Panel also supported the University's recognition of risk management requirements in regards to third party organisations (see Affirmation 8).

CSU continues to implement its Policy on Risk Management, integrating this with existing management responsibilities and structures and planning and budget processes. Key achievements to date include:

- Establishment and operation of the 'Audit and Risk' and 'Commercial Activities and Compliance' committees of Council.
- Endorsement of a framework for the implementation of risk management by the Audit and Risk Committee of Council and within this framework the:
 - Development and maintenance of a corporate level risk assessment which is reviewed by University Council and included in each Annual Report as standard practice;
 - Implementation of risk management processes at Faculty and Division level, as evidenced by Risk Registers aligned with Operational Plans;
 - The embedding of risk management training and requirements in key Human Resource policies and processes such as duty statements, Performance Management and staff selection, induction and professional development.
- Progressive implementation of the risk management framework to school and section level with full implementation by the beginning of 2008.

The University has achieved compliance with the National Governance Protocols 9 - 11 (which relate to risk management) in 2005 and expects to do so again in 2006.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that CSU further develop its planning and review cycle to include an explicit link to the organisationally recognised driver of quality; namely, improvement.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 13

CSU management acknowledges the fundamental role of 'improvement' as a driver of enhanced quality and therefore quality assurance process. This was evident in the *CSU Strategic Plan 2002-2007* where 'continuous enhancement and renewal of its academic activities and administrative and support services' was referred to as the 'future direction of the University' (p.3). AUQA commented on the 'good progress that has been made in formalising planning processes and in developing alignment between plans at every level' (p.3) and acknowledged the development of the planning and review cycle which is depicted in the *User's Guide to the Strategic Plan*. However, the Audit Panel identified that an explicit link between planning, review and improvement was missing.

The University has formulated its new *University Strategy 2007-2011* and is currently working to develop associated University Plans to better articulate institution wide goals and priorities. A timeline has been established for the development of University Plans and associated Annual Operational Plans for Faculties and Divisions. The revised planning structure is intended to provide focus on important issues, promote a consistent and coherent response to cross institutional issues and enhance accountabilities. The *University Strategy 2007-2011* has institutional level performance indicators (that will, where possible, be disaggregated to lower levels) and agreed targets against which to monitor performance. These targets will require continuous improvement. University Plans will also be expected to identify performance indicators for monitoring institutional progress in achieving goals that will necessitate continuous improvement.

The *User's Guide to the Strategic Plan* has been revised to reflect the University's commitment to continuous improvement and renewal, while a similar commitment has been established to monitor performance and identify improvements to be achieved at institutional and lower levels through the annual planning and review cycle.

The new Performance Management Scheme will enable the responsibility for improvement to be taken down to individual staff member level.

Consistent with the University's commitment to continuous improvement, CSU has established a University wide Work Process Improvement (WPI) project. This involves a systematic review of all CSU processes, interactions and work flows as the basis for bringing about fundamental business improvements. Stage 1 of the Project will be concluded in 2006. Stage 2, involving implementation of process improvements, will commence in 2007.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that CSU formalise its expectations around use of the term 'review' including how it is distinguished from 'monitoring' and develop guidelines on initiation, frequency, process, use of external input and follow-up of reviews for both academic and service areas of the University. Clarification is also required of the definition and intent of 'benchmarking'.

Organisational Overview and Quality Assurance, page 15

The Audit Panel expressed the view that *'greater attention is required to defining the nature and different forms of review activity'* and noted that the University does not have a *'formal schedule of reviews of academic and support areas'*. It acknowledged that CSU had expressed a desire to formalise review, to seek external input and advice more frequently and to benchmark.

The Planning and Review process at CSU is a centrally coordinated process to jointly monitor and document current and prospective activities at a high level (i.e. at the Faculty and Division level) and link these with the various aspects of resourcing. Separate from this centrally coordinated process and as would be expected, individual sections also 'monitor' and 'review' their activities to ensure their efficiency, effectiveness and ongoing improvement.

The centralised Planning and Review process is not intended to replace periodic and formal 'review' of function, role, structure and operation of individual sections. These 'reviews' are conducted on an 'as needs' basis, under Terms of Reference dictated by strategic priorities, utilising external expertise as seen to be necessary. CSU has been active in establishing such reviews in the support areas and has continued to adhere to this approach.

CSU has also been active in monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of its academic activities, guiding the development of its course, subject and staffing profile. Such reviews, for example the reviews of the undergraduate and postgraduate course profiles in 2003 and 2004 and the review of the Orange course profile in 2005, use well established indicators such as enrolments, load, attrition, completion, student feedback, staffing, income, and so on.

Within each of the above processes individual managers may 'benchmark' CSU performance against performance in a similar context in another institution or against recognised and/or accepted industry or sector standards.

In preparation for the implementation of the University Strategy 2007 – 2011, CSU has undertaken a major review of structures and processes. This has resulted in changes to Faculty structures and processes; research support; and Divisional alignments and structures.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that CSU clarify for all staff the intended role to be played by Academic Senate in fostering collegial discussion and debate and in leading academic policy development and monitoring. Senate's formal relationship to Council with respect to governing and assuring the quality of the University's academic activities also needs to be clarified.

Learning and Teaching, page 18

It would appear that the self assessment and audit interviews did not provide the Audit Panel with a full understanding of the role played by Academic Senate and its operations, particularly in relation to the role of its subcommittees in fostering debate across the institution and in providing input into Senate discussion and decision making. The Audit Panel noted that at the time of the Audit, the University community was in the process of clarifying Academic Senate's formal relationship with Council.

The relationship of Academic Senate to University Council has been clarified through the University's review of its governance processes. Academic Senate has been confirmed as the principal body responsible for the quality of the University's courses; learning and teaching; and research.

In addition, after consideration of a paper relating to Recommendation 4, Academic Senate has affirmed that collegial discussion and debate will continue to be primarily fostered through its sub-committees, especially the Learning and Teaching Committee; Board of Graduate Studies; Research Management Committee; Academic Programs Committee; and Faculty Boards. Senate also affirmed the importance of *ad hoc* working parties for this purpose.

The composition and functions of the Academic Senate have been further considered by the University during 2006 with the result that Academic Senate has requested University Council approve a new Rule at its September 2006 meeting. The Rule details the composition and functions of the Academic Senate and clarifies the authority of the Senate as the principal academic body of the University.

Recommendation 5

AUQA recommends that Academic Senate reconsider the various mechanisms it has in place for assuring the quality of teaching and learning within CSU to ensure that they are able to effectively and efficiently support continuous improvement of the University's academic activities.

Learning and Teaching, page 19

The Academic Programs Committee (APC), the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Board of Graduate Studies and the Quality Audit Committee are committees of the Academic Senate whose responsibilities include auditing the various academic activities for which they are accountable. It was the Audit Panel's view that the systems that were in place should be reviewed to provide a more comprehensive approach to audit, implementation of recommendations and monitoring of expected improvements.

The Academic Senate has given further consideration to the auditing responsibilities of its committees and has clarified the responsibilities of the APC, the Audit Committee (formerly the Quality Audit Committee), the Board of Graduate Studies and the Learning and Teaching Committee in relation to assuring the quality of the various academic activities for which they are accountable. The role of the Audit Committee has been changed such that it is now responsible for conducting audits of the practices and operation of the Academic Senate.

Continuous improvement has also been addressed through changes to the University's policies and processes for student feedback on learning and teaching (see Affirmation 3). Improvement mechanisms have also been strengthened with regard to monitoring attrition and other measures of course performance (see Affirmation 4), as well as participation in forums by staff (Recommendation 12) and assignment return.

These mechanisms are the subject of ongoing review by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

As previously mentioned, the University is in the process of developing plans to underpin its Strategy for the period 2007-2011. One such plan will cover Learning and Teaching, with this Plan expected to be approved by the Academic Senate in October 2006. The Learning and Teaching Plan 2007-2011 will include strategies and targets that focus upon continuous improvement in all facets of the University's learning and teaching.

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that the Learning and Teaching Committee give priority to implementing the University's Learning and Teaching Plan and ensuring that faculty operational plans align more closely to this Plan.

Learning and Teaching, page 20

The Audit Panel was provided with a monitoring report of the Learning and Teaching Plan and found evidence that, while a significant proportion of the Plan had been actioned, some areas were yet to be progressed. The Audit Panel was of the view that the Plan neglected to significantly drive the Learning and Teaching Committee's functions or Faculty priorities and actions, possibly because the Plan was developed prior to the establishment of the Learning and Teaching Committee.

The planning framework under the *University Strategy 2007-2011* includes a number of 5 year University Plans, one of which is the Learning and Teaching Plan. This Plan is currently being developed by the Learning and Teaching Committee and is expected to be approved by the Academic Senate in October 2006, with input from a respected external consultant. The Plan will form a 'bridge' between the University Strategy and Faculty and Divisional Operational Plans – including performance indicators (and targets) consistent with institutional level indicators and targets. Faculty and Divisional Operational Plans will be required to be aligned with the Learning and Teaching Plan.

Key areas within the Plan will relate to the future learning environment at CSU, including key principles for the development of learning systems.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that CSU further develop its ability to achieve its goal of exemplary academic service to all students and to monitor this across mode, location and academic area.

Learning and Teaching, page 21

During the visit to CSU's Wagga Wagga Campus, the Audit Panel had the opportunity to interview students from various courses, modes of study, backgrounds, etc. While feedback from students in regard to their learning and teaching experience was positive, the Audit Panel detected variable experiences. In general, students were *'appreciative of many dedicated, accessible and personally supportive teaching staff'*, but found inconsistent experiences *'around staff use of the subject outline to provide information about the subject (see section 2.3.1); the educational approach taken in distance education study guides (see section 2.6); the frequency and nature of staff moderation of online discussion fora (see section 2.6.1); and the nature of feedback to students on assessed work'* (p20). The Audit Panel was of the opinion that the inconsistencies were due to the variations in interpretation and application of academic policies. The Audit Panel noted its support for the University's recognition that improvement was required in the communication of new or modified academic policy to staff.

This recommendation is being addressed at a number of levels. The University has worked to strengthen mechanisms for student feedback, including:

- the establishment of student evaluation (online) for every subject, each session, and in each mode and location (see Affirmation 3), with supporting processes to ensure that performance is monitored within each school and faculty with a view to continuous improvement;
- the establishment of a Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) administered to second-year students to monitor student satisfaction with courses and the general environment;
- information on subject evaluations and the SEQ will be included as institutional performance indicators and monitored at the faculty level and by the Learning and Teaching Committee;
- Subject evaluation data, aggregated at School and discipline level is reported publicly along with School responses, including proposed improvements; and
- The University has established of the Subject Outline Management System (SOMS) which will see all subject outlines being available to students online within a prescribed set of templates that conform to Academic Senate policy on subject outlines. It has also strengthened systems for monitoring staff participation in forum and assignment return.

Academic Senate requires of itself communication and implementation plans in relation to decisions and specific review dates in relation to policy. The terms of reference of the Academic Programs Committee, Board of Graduate Studies and Learning & Teaching Committee have been amended to clarify their roles in the auditing and monitoring of academic policies.

Induction and learning and teaching development programs are conducted regularly and extend to casual and partner staff, as well as permanent academic staff.

Grade recommendations are reported to Assessment Committees in a way which allows comparison of cohorts.



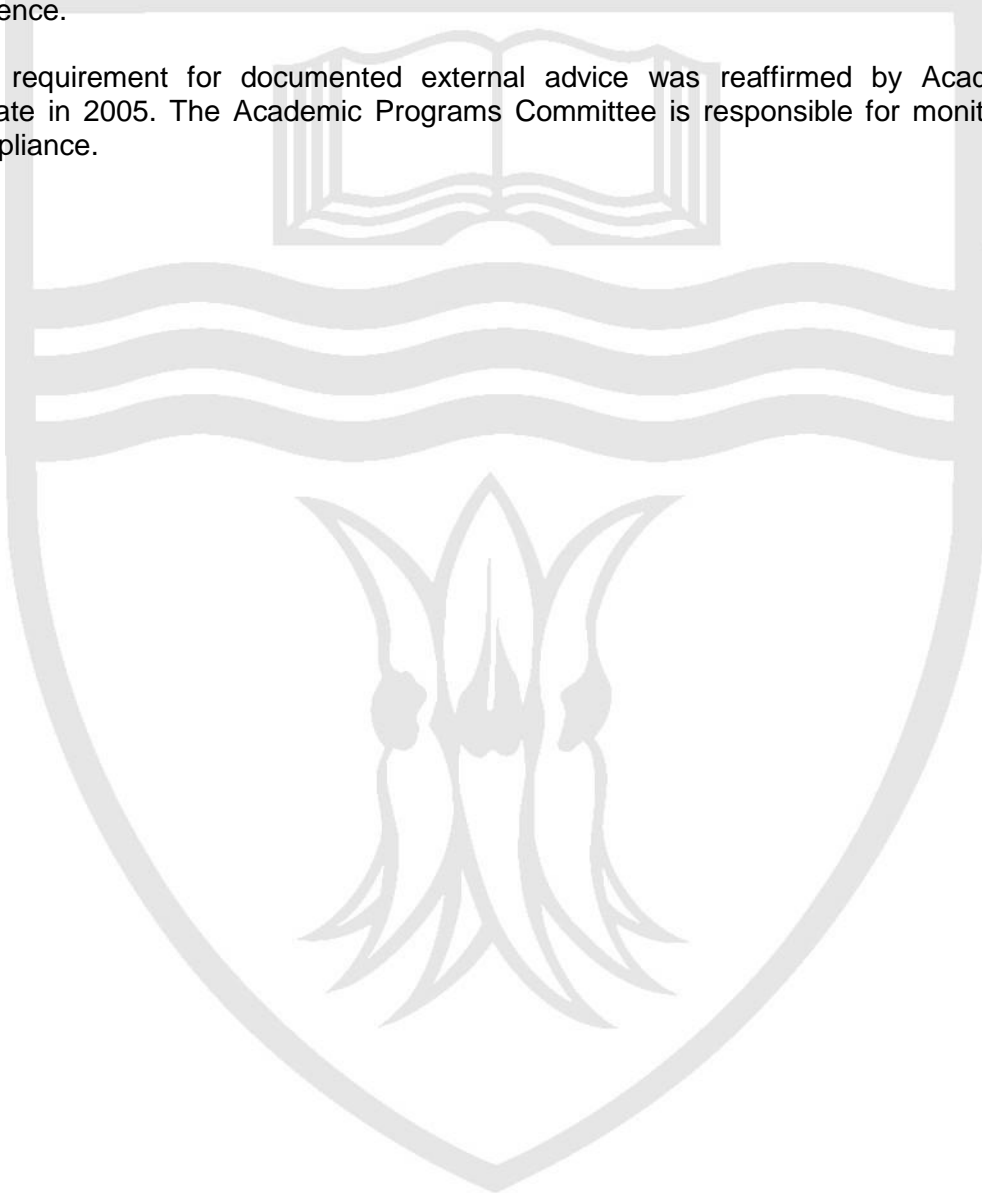
Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms CSU's intention to require systematic external input for both course approval and course review and that this input be documented.

Learning and Teaching, page 21

External advice has been a requirement in course approval and course review since April 2002. Prior to that time it was considered desirable but not necessary. Whilst compliance with the requirement is high, the University identified the need to further clarify requirements with regard to external advice and the ensuing documentary evidence.

The requirement for documented external advice was reaffirmed by Academic Senate in 2005. The Academic Programs Committee is responsible for monitoring compliance.



Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that CSU maintain a central schedule of five-yearly course and other reviews that takes account of external requirements such as professional accreditation and that can be used to ensure that all required reviews are completed.

Learning and Teaching, page 22

The Audit Panel examined two courses in detail during the Audit and found that there was awareness of CSU's requirement that courses be reviewed every 5 years. However, one such course review had been delayed to coincide with the professional accreditation process that was being undertaken. The Audit Panel supported the University's introduction of Course and Subject Information System (CASIMS) to systematise internal review and to accommodate documentation of information on professional accreditation.

A register of scheduled reviews has been compiled and is held in the Academic Secretariat. Conduct of reviews is being monitored and suspension of intakes to a course may result where a review is not completed in a timely manner. The introduction of CASIMS ensures the tracking of this requirement.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that CSU establish a more rigorous process for ensuring that subject outlines comply with University policy both in the nature of their content and their currency.

Learning and Teaching, page 22

The Audit Panel noted that progress had been made in gaining consistency in the handling of Subject Outlines but believed that greater urgency was required in communicating practices to academic staff.

Academic Senate has determined that all Subject Outlines must be provided online from 2006. This requirement is being supported by a Subject Outline Management System (SOMS). SOMS has been designed to reflect Senate's requirements through the use of specific mandatory fields that link to relevant fields in the Course and Subject Information System (CASIMS), ensuring currency and conformity with subject approvals.

All subject outlines for Trimesters are now available through SOMS. Distance education and internal subject outlines for Spring session 2006 are available through SOMS. Work is continuing in loading all subjects into the Management System and it is anticipated that all other subject outlines will be available from Autumn session 2007. Academic staff will be able to access subject outlines for the updating of information from Spring session 2007.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that CSU Academic Senate develop, as a priority, more effective mechanisms for ensuring the consistent implementation within faculties of University policy for assuring academic quality and standards across all delivery modes and locations.

Learning and Teaching, page 23

The Audit Panel identified *'varied understanding amongst academic staff about how academic standards across mode and location can most effectively be assured'* (p23). While the Audit Panel noted that School and Faculty Assessment Committees are operating effectively in checking for conformity of student grades against Faculty and University policy, it felt that *'outward looking comparisons are less systematically undertaken'* and *'the extent to which faculties are undertaking comparison of student outcomes across cohorts of students in different locations varies considerably'* (p23). Also, while *'the Panel found that a great deal of attention is applied by CSU to upholding [the moderation] policy'* (p43), it felt that too much reliance was being placed on moderation of third party student grades.

This issue has been addressed by Academic Senate through its contribution to the review of partner and Trans-National Education (TNE) programs, a major element of which has been ensuring the equivalence of the educational experience of students taught under these arrangements with that of domestic students.

Actions to date include:

- Changes to student feedback mechanisms aimed at giving all students access to these mechanisms regardless of location or mode.
- Annual Reports on student feedback and on teaching performance required to be submitted by each School to the Learning and Teaching committee of Academic Senate.
- An induction program for partner academic staff has been developed. Such staff will have access to the online version of CSU's Foundations of University Learning and Teaching from 2006.
- Grade recommendations are now reported to Assessment Committees in a format which allows comparison across cohorts.
- Key course indicators such as attrition are now monitored by the University Course Planning Committee (UCPC) by cohort as well as course.
- The University has recently reaffirmed the responsibility of UCPC for approving the offering of a course in a new location or mode.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms CSU's recognition of the need to formalise and systematise the manner in which student evaluation information of subjects, courses and teaching is collected and, more importantly, acted upon, so as to achieve the University's objective of continuous improvement.

Learning and Teaching, page 23

The University's self-review identified the need for improved systems for student evaluation of subjects, courses and teaching, a finding that was endorsed by the Audit Panel.

Following establishment of relevant policy, the University has implemented a number of systems, comprising:

- an administration system (online) to evaluate all CSU subjects each time they are offered, with feedback made available to Heads of Schools and a requirement for a School based report to be provided to the Faculty Board and the Learning and Teaching Committee;
- publication of results of student evaluations (aggregated at School and discipline level) and School responses on a publicly available website;
- a system to administer and report on the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ), in which results are monitored as faculty and institutional performance criteria; and
- a requirement for student focus groups to be used in course review, with outcomes to be provided to the Academic Programs Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee.

The University has adopted continuous improvement in subject evaluations and SEQ data as Key Performance Indicators in the University Strategy 2007-2011.

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that in progressing towards its goal of developing a 'leading edge learning environment', CSU clarify how effective leadership of its online learning and teaching initiatives will be secured. This will need to take place in conjunction with the recommended reconsideration of the future role and function of the Centre for Enhancing Learning and Teaching.

Learning and Teaching, page 25

The Audit Panel commented on the positive start that CSU has made to its online learning environment. However, it recommended that effective leadership be clarified to avoid '*undesirable variations in online teaching practice and quality*'. This also relates to Recommendation 13 below.

Leadership of the online learning and teaching initiatives of CSU is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Committee supported by the Information and Learning Systems Committee (ILSC). Both committees are chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Senior staff of the Centre for Enhancing Learning and Teaching (CELT) play a major role in advising the Learning and Teaching Committee and the ILSC on the development of the learning environment. The Director of CELT is a member of both Committees as well as of Academic Senate.

The Director of CELT formulated a draft plan for the development of CSU's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which was considered at a joint meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee and the ILSC in June 2005 and by the Professorial Forum and Vice-Chancellor's Forum. It has been circulated to the Faculties for comment as part of the development of the next Learning and Teaching Plan. This plan and several other discussion papers prepared by CELT are expected to inform key elements of the University's 5 year Learning and Teaching Plan that will form part of the planning framework and will be finalised by November 2006.

A group of projects has been approved in order to continue the development of the VLE, including the Digital Object Management System and the selection of a new online learning framework. The ongoing 'Online Learning Environment' program will establish a fully integrated online environment and provide specific enhancements to the current environment including, an online 'Grade Book', a 'Work Space' for students and an 'e-portfolio' capacity. Communication and staff development strategies are being identified.

CSU has affirmed leadership in flexible and distance learning as a key strategic goal in its University Strategy 2007-2011.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that CSU ensure Heads of School attend more closely to the end of session Online Forum Manager summary reports to ensure that staff assigned responsibility for this role are undertaking it satisfactorily, thereby ensuring greater consistency in the student experience across subjects.

Learning and Teaching, page 26

The Audit Panel encountered an '*overwhelmingly positive*' reaction from students in regards to the online facilities available on *my.csu*, which includes online discussion fora and online submission of assignments. The Audit Panel identified that staff involvement with the online forums was '*highly variable ranging from excellent interaction between teacher and students through to virtually no staff involvement*'. It was on this basis the Audit Panel recommended that the summary reports, which are already useful tools, be given more attention.

The University, through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has made Heads of Schools aware of this recommendation and has requested the Learning Materials Centre (which is responsible for the reports) to provide copies to Deans and a copy to his Office.

Academic Senate has reviewed its policy on communication with students and has promulgated minimum standards for staff contributions to forums as well as guidelines for effective management of forums.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has also sought to clarify for students what it is appropriate to expect from staff, as further review of this matter showed that some student concerns arose from inappropriate expectations.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that CSU, utilising external expertise as necessary, reconsider the future role and function of the Centre for Enhancing Learning and Teaching [CELT] with regard to leadership of pedagogical development, especially in the online environment, in order to meet the University's goal of developing a leading edge learning environment.

Learning and Teaching, page 26

The Audit Panel noted that it had encountered an *'overwhelmingly positive'* reaction from students in regards to the online facilities available on *my.csu*. It also noted *'that a good deal of productive work is being undertaken by CELT staff and that academic staff appreciate and value the input offered by educational designers'* and concluded that *'CELT's activities could be characterised as being largely responsive and supportive'*. The Audit Panel felt that *'the University's expanded expectations in this regard warrant a considered view as to the most appropriate future role and function for CELT'*, particularly given *'the rapid pace of developments in technology-based teaching'*. While acknowledging that CELT had been reviewed in 2002, the Audit Panel felt that another review was timely, considering two senior management positions were vacant at the time.

The University has reaffirmed its position that leadership of pedagogical development is the responsibility of Academic Senate through the Learning and Teaching Committee. The role of CELT is to provide expert advice; staff development; and support for the development of the learning environment.

The University has strengthened the institutional positioning of CELT through the inclusion of the Director, CELT, on all major decision making and advisory committees dealing with learning and teaching; the transfer of key learning and teaching functions to CELT (teaching awards; external teaching and learning grants; teaching induction and academic staff development in learning and teaching); and responsibility for the Virtual Learning Environment project.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that considerable attention is required to lessen rates of student attrition, particularly for undergraduate students from first to second year.

Learning and Teaching, page 27

Although Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) data shows that CSU's overall attrition rates are consistent with that of other universities, CSU has taken measures to reduce attrition amongst various student cohorts. The Audit Panel acknowledged the work being undertaken by CSU to address attrition but pointed to the need to ensure a coherent, university wide approach. See also Commendation 5 and Affirmation 3.

Subsequent to the Audit, the 2004 DEST Institutional Assessment Framework (IAF) confirmed CSU's own understanding that attrition rates at CSU compare favourably to those in similar universities. DEST pointed out, however, that attrition rates for international students at CSU appear to be higher than for the sector generally. In addition and subsequently, data used by DEST for the 2005 Learning & Teaching Performance Fund identified CSU as the second best performer in the sector with regard to first year attrition, after adjustment is made for the characteristics of the student cohort.

In response to the Affirmation 4, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in consultation with relevant sections within the University has reviewed current arrangements and has prepared an integrated statement of policies and responsibilities. This statement reaffirms CSU's targets with regard to attrition and timelines for monitoring attrition. The statement has been endorsed by the University Course Planning Committee (UCPC), the Academic Programs Committee and the Division of Student Services.

Since the AUQA Audit three major initiatives foreshadowed in the University's Performance Portfolio have been implemented, these being:

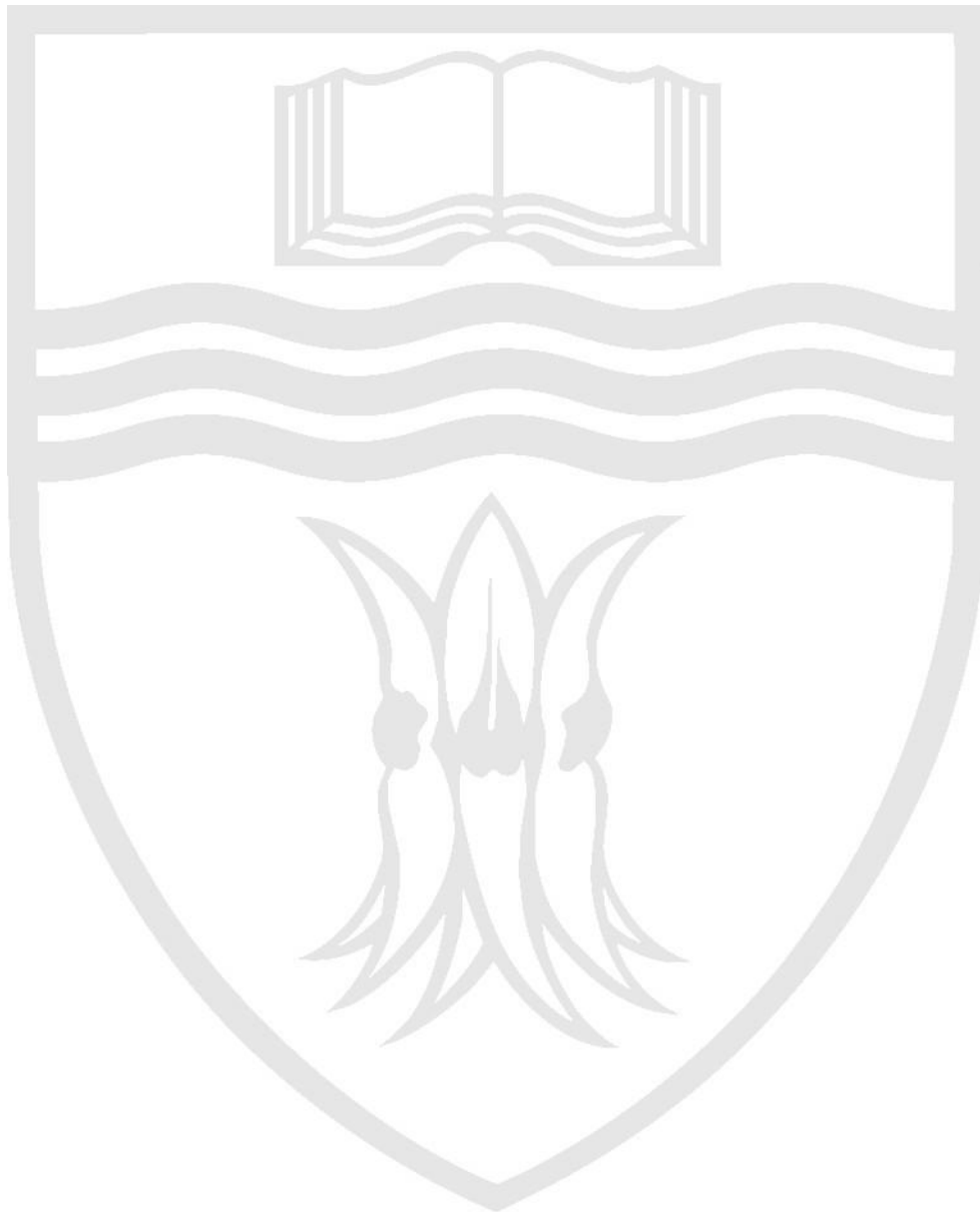
- the Student Experience Project, overseen by the Information and Learning Systems Committee, (and incorporating a 'Students at Risk' program and student induction program) which draws together activities by the Division of Student Services, the Library, the Centre for Enhanced Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Learning Materials Centre (see Commendation 5);
- the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ)*, conducted by CELT and administered to all students completing the first year of enrolment (see Affirmation 3); and
- a detailed analysis of attrition by CELT, using data provided by the Office of Planning and Audit.

The UCPC has been assigned overall responsibility for monitoring attrition. As such, the UCPC annually reviews attrition from first to second year for CSU courses. Several courses have been placed on notice and are being reviewed by the relevant faculties after having been identified as having unacceptably high levels of attrition.

With regard to the high level of attrition of international students identified by DEST, analysis has shown that this relates principally to international students studying with Australian based partners. The UCPC asked Faculties to prepare a report on these programs, including proposals to address the issue. Reports were considered at the

August 2005 meeting of the UCPC and proposals from Faculties to improve performance were noted. The UCPC will continue to monitor performance.

* Results from the SEQ are provided to Faculties, relevant Divisions, the Learning & Teaching Committee and UCPC for consideration. The results and University responses will also be provided on the public Student Feedback website of CELT.



Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that additional research indicators need to be identified that more appropriately reflect and measure progress towards its objective of engaging in research of significance to its regions.

Research and Research Training, page 32

As part of its self assessment, the University established that its goal of producing high quality research of significance to its regions was not reflected in the key indicators of context and performance, and therefore measures were initiated to resolve this shortcoming.

The University now reports the number of research grants that relate to rural and regional areas. This is an indicator of active engagement with the regions and with important research relating to rural and regional contexts. The University also reports the amount of funding attracted from these grants as an indicator of the financial contribution that external agencies are prepared to invest to seek solutions to rural and regional issues and challenges.

In 2005, CSU research centres were required to submit a quality portfolio, in which one of the indicators for quality related to the impact of the research on end users. This information provided a descriptive snapshot of the University's engagement in research of significance to its region and the impact of that research, complementing the existing research indicators outlined above.

When the Research Quality Framework is implemented the context statements will provide more specific information about how CSU is engaging in research of significance and impact to its regions.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that further work is required to map the contribution of staff to its regional engagement mission.

Regional Engagement, page 37

The Audit Panel recognised the contributions that CSU had made to regional engagement and acknowledged CSU's admission that it is often difficult 'to catalogue, document and analyse the University's contribution to regional engagement'. The Audit Panel endorsed the University's view at that time that further work was required to develop the compilation and analysis of staff contributions that support the University's regional engagement objectives.

The University Strategy 2007-2011 identifies the University's intent to establish itself as a national university, operating in a regional setting. As such, the University seeks to continue its contribution to the communities of central and south western NSW and northern Victoria, while strengthening its profile further afield. The University has determined to organise its efforts (and monitor its impact) through:

- maintenance of a course profile which meets the needs of regional communities and monitoring of demands from CSU's regions and employment destinations of graduates;
- scholarship programs which benefit regional students;
- strengthening links with regional schools, Institutes of TAFE and industries and professions in course provision;
- the continued work of Heads of Campus and their involvement in Regional Consultative Committees;
- support for Research groupings that work for the benefit of CSU's communities; and
- support for Consultancy groups serving regional needs, for example the Western Research Institute.

In relation to the work of Heads of Campus, a joint meeting of the University's Regional Consultative Committees has been held in which the role of the committees has been clarified. Members have been briefed on the scope of the University's operations and its impact on the regions. Regional consultative arrangements have been revised to include the newly acquired Orange campus.

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that indicators need to be identified that more appropriately reflect and measure the influence the University has on its regions.

Regional Engagement, page 38

The Audit Panel endorsed CSU's self assessment that identified the need for indicators *'that better reflect and measure the influence of the University has on its regions'*.

As stated, CSU maintains its commitment to central and south western NSW and northern Victoria, while seeking to further establish itself as a national university. The University has therefore continued to establish robust ways to measure its influence upon its regions, although these may not necessarily be reflected as specific institutional performance indicators.

Key achievements to date include:

- The commissioning of the Western Research Institute (WRI) to conduct a study of the economic impact of CSU on its regional areas and campus cities. The report was made public in May 2005 and CSU management has determined to actively investigate opportunities to add depth to or extend the study.
- Agreement with the WRI to update and extend its report on destinations of CSU graduates.
- Enhancement of internal reporting systems so as to be able to report on the extent to which CSU's courses support specific regional communities and cohorts of students, for example those from remote areas.

Consistent with its response to Affirmation 6, the University intends to monitor its influence on its regions in research and consultancies by way of relevant groups.

Recommendation 14

AUQA recommends that in finalising its Strategic Framework for Internationalisation, CSU clarify the strategy's role in identifying priorities with regard to locations and modes of operation abroad, the likely effect on the University's international student recruitment in Australia and consider how the University might more effectively harness the considerable market intelligence available from its own staff and from its various partners.

Internationalisation, page 41

The reconstitution of the International Strategy Committee (ISC) (see Recommendation 1) has provided a mechanism for identifying priorities relating to the University's International Strategic Framework. The ISC will now recommend to the UCPC how prospective projects should be prioritised, especially in relation to location.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor and CSU International (CSUI) held a one-day Seminar in 2005 and established a detailed framework for TNE developments, including the commissioning, management and decommissioning of TNE projects.

An approval process for new TNE activities has been agreed by the ISC at its meeting of 1 August 2006. The approval process, involving the UCPC, will assist in ensuring that appropriate consultation occurs on proposed TNE activities and subsequent business cases and that in the case that a proposal is pursued, a rigorous and consistent set of processes is applied.

With the development of the University Strategy 2007-2011, there will be a further realignment of the international activities of CSU, with a sharper focus on the development of quality international partnerships and student mobility.

Recommendation 15

AUQA recommends that CSU clarify the locus of responsibilities for international activities so that all within the University understand where responsibility lies.

Internationalisation, page 41

The University has determined that strategic responsibility for international activities should reside with the International Strategy Committee (ISC). With the decision to make the ISC a sub-committee of UCPC from August 2006, UCPC (which now has comprehensive Division and Faculty representation), will consider strategic issues, in international course provision, including alignment with University Strategy, risk management, resourcing and impact on University performance.

The Office of International Relations (OIR) has been created and reports to the DVC (Administration). The Office provides project management for international activities, partnership management and business case development and risk assessment. A Transnational Education (TNE) Project Manager position within OIR provides project management assistance to current and future TNE initiatives.

Responsibility for academic quality assurance of international activities rests with Academic Senate and Faculties.

Recommendation 16

AUQA recommends that CSU recognise and support more appropriately the work being undertaken by the various groups within the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Science and Agriculture to develop and strengthen the entirety of the University's activities with third party providers.

Internationalisation, page 41

Up to and including 2006, the University's third-party offerings were concentrated in the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Science and Agriculture. The Panel acknowledged the systems in place to support these partnerships, particularly in terms of quality assurance and quality control. However, the recommendation stems from the Panel's opinion that the University should reconsider the heavy reliance placed on a small group of staff within the Faculties to further opportunities for quality enhancement and development. Also, the Panel identified an opportunity to take advantage of the strong connections between the Faculty staff and transnational partners *'to accomplish environmental scanning, to plan optimally and to manage risks effectively'* (p.41).

The formation of the International Strategy Committee and the establishment of the Transnational Education (TNE) Project Manager position have facilitated more effective recognition of, and input from, the respective Faculties.

The University's support for the restructuring of the International School of Business in the Faculty of Commerce reflects its support for this Faculty's model for managing its international activities.

In conjunction with the development of the University Strategy 2007-2011, a review of the Faculty structures is occurring. One outcome will be the incorporation into one Faculty of the major international activities of the Faculties of Commerce and Science and Agriculture. This will strengthen and make more consistent the University's activities with third-party providers.

Affirmation 8

AUQA affirms CSU's finding that increased monitoring and evaluation of the performance of its off- and on-shore partners is required.

Internationalisation, page 42

Prior to the Audit, the University's third-party agreements had been under review and the Panel acknowledged the tangible outcomes that had already resulted. The Panel endorsed the University's finding that improvement was required of existing systems to monitor and evaluate partner performance.

Charles Sturt University International (CSUI) has undertaken a major review of how it manages its partners. This has included:

- an analysis of the performance of all offshore and onshore partners, and how the University administration and the Faculties managed the relationships;
- a review of every legal agreement in operation (in conjunction with the Office of Corporate Governance);
- renegotiation of agreements with all Transnational Education (TNE) and local partners on the basis of new business cases and with risk assessments; and
- design of legal templates to be used in new ventures and in renegotiated TNE ventures.

CSU has also revised monitoring and evaluation systems for TNE and local partners, including:

- designing systems to receive information and feedback from Faculties with respect to student and partner performance;
- enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of business performance;
- development by the Faculties of protocols for course operations management with partners resulting in the preparation of detailed manuals for use by partners and the Faculties;
- regular status reporting to stakeholders and the ISC on key TNE contracts;
- continued consolidation of TNE relationships to enable focus on development of robust and quality assured programs with strong alignment to the University Strategy.

Recommendation 17

AUQA recommends that CSU adopt a risk-oriented approach in the scheduling of its evaluation of current third party providers and that it develop more effective tools for the evaluation of prospective third-party teaching partners and agents and devise appropriate formal approval protocols.

Internationalisation, page 43

This Recommendation is related to both Recommendations 14 and 15 and is in response to the Panel's view that CSU needed to formalise and enhance the risk orientation of existing processes and procedures.

A template for scoping, evaluating and commissioning Transnational Education (TNE) or other commercial projects has been designed through the interaction of the Office of Corporate Governance with CSUI, the Division of Financial Services, and the SEG and has been in use since 2005.

This template provides a comprehensive roadmap for a risk-based approach to the evaluation of international and local third-party provider proposals. It has the following key attributes to ensure effective evaluation of future proposals:

- a business plan approach to evaluation, i.e. it embraces the latest concepts in business planning;
- risk analysis which is sensitive to the cultural attributes, business practices and legal environments of developing and other countries; and
- a comprehensive financial modelling tool which allows the University to evaluate the financial implications and sustainability of the proposal for both CSU and the partner.

Recommendation 18

AUQA recommends that CSU find more effective mechanisms to ensure that staff employed by third party providers to teach the University's courses have a clear understanding of the philosophy of CSU's approach to learning and teaching, and particularly, its standards of student assessment.

Internationalisation, page 44

In making this Recommendation, the Audit Panel noted that there were many successful mechanisms in place, including systems for recruitment of third-party provider staff, the setting of assessment tasks, moderation of assessments and site visits. However, the Panel found that these systems were not consistently effective and require improving if high quality outcomes were to be maintained.

Project management specifications have now been approved by the University for Transnational Education projects. They include the development of partner Administration and Course Operations Manuals, which ensure close scrutiny and management of these matters through:

- approval of staff employed by partners on CSU programs by the relevant Dean;
- the continuing professional development of partner staff; and
- monitoring of performance by CSU, including attrition and student feedback.

Recommendation 19

AUQA recommends that in light of its plans to increase the number and cultural diversity of its on-campus international students, CSU develop a fully planned, integrated and resourced approach to service delivery to these students.

Internationalisation, page 45

The Audit Panel encountered international students who *'felt generally well supported'* and staff who *'are clearly dedicated to supporting students to the best of their ability'* (p45). However, the Panel felt that the *'sound working relationship between the two areas'* of CSU International (CSUI) and Student Services could be improved by way of earlier notification to Student Services to prepare for and manage the arrival of increased numbers of diverse international students.

The Division of Student Services has now been assigned full responsibility for support of international students, including English language support. Additional staffing has been assigned. A plan has been approved for further staffing as numbers increase.

The integration of service delivery has also been strengthened by the integration of Residences and Catering with Student Services.

Recommendation 20

AUQA recommends that CSU reconsider the role and content of 'The Student and University Charter Expectations and Responsibilities' to ensure that the undertakings it makes are realistic and achievable for its diverse student groups.

Resource Management and Generation, page 47

At the time of the Audit, CSU had identified a need to improve the understanding and promotion of *The Student and University Charter, Expectations and Responsibilities* to students and staff. After conducting interviews with students from various cohorts, the Audit Panel confirmed this need and recommended that the Charter be reviewed to give more prominence to the perspective of students studying via distance education and through third party providers prior to any such promotion.

The Academic Senate has agreed that the student information booklet *Putting It Together – A Guide to Learning at CSU* will be revised to ensure that its content is relevant to overseas students as well as on-campus and distance education students. When the revised booklet is published the Student and University Charter will be rescinded.

The Director, Centre for Enhancing Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Executive Director, Division of Student Services convened a working party to revise the booklet. The Guide includes details of the mutual expectations and responsibilities of students and the University. It will also include details of student services; academic policies such as communication with students and expectations regarding plagiarism and the integrity of assessment; complaints management; and provision of online services and learning support.

A fully revised Guide will be available for all students in 2007. For 2006 revisions were made to online information for students. Revisions were also made to partnership arrangements to ensure equivalence in support for CSU students studying through partnership agreements.

Affirmation 9

AUQA affirms CSU's ongoing efforts to strengthen its library collection in targeted areas deemed to be strategically significant to its research profile.

Resource Management and Generation, page 47

The Audit Panel acknowledged CSU's intention to enhance the quality of its service to research students and staff, particularly in the key areas of research focus. The University has continued to concentrate on building its library collection to Conspectus Levels 4 and 5 in key areas of research focus as outlined below.

In April 2005, a report of the requirements for a world class library support for CSU's designated research areas of viticulture/winemaking, irrigation and water ecology was presented by the Executive Director of Library Service to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Graduate Training). The budgetary implications for building the collection in these areas were considered by Council as part of the discussions relating to strategic investment in research.

Consistent with this report, the Library is now working on increasing the University's access to online databases and on enhancing its holdings in these areas of research strength. During the second half of 2005, the Library added significantly to its collection of research publications. With input from researchers across the institution, over \$200,000 was spent on the purchase of more than 1,500 research-level books, papers and dissertations. Selection focused on, but was not limited to, CSU's designated research areas.

The Research Management Committee has identified three further areas for further development and these have been conveyed to the Library. These will be developed as funding becomes available. The Library continues to respond to CSU's evolving research areas and is monitoring the development of the University's 5 year Research Plan.

Note: CSU has now achieved Conspectus Level 4-5 rating for its holdings in the areas of Theology and Ethics.

Recommendation 21

AUQA recommends that CSU give consideration to including a 360 degree feedback process for Deans, Directors and senior executive, as part of the leadership development and performance management activities of these staff.

Human Resources, page 51

At the time of the Audit, a formal Performance Management Scheme was being adopted throughout the University, and in the view of the Audit Panel, achieving tangible benefits particularly in regard to aligning individual and corporate objectives. Many Heads of School had been engaged with a 360 degree feedback exercise as part of the University's Leadership Development Program and found this to be a useful exercise. With the successful implementation of leadership initiatives for Heads of School, the Audit Panel therefore recommended the extension of the 360 degree feedback process to senior management, in line with the University's commitment to developing its leaders.

The University has external support for leadership and development and performance as follows:

- In early 2005, an emotional intelligence assessment tool was made available to leaders within the University in order to allow them to better assess their leadership characteristics;
- The Vice-Chancellor has undertaken a 360 degree feedback exercise, as a precursor to other leaders being provided with the same opportunity in the second half of 2006;
- The Senior Executive Group (SEG) has undertaken a leadership team evaluation; and
- A second round of the Climate Survey will be conducted in August 2006.

The University's ongoing commitment to leadership development is evident in its 2007-2011 Strategy and this will be reflected in the supporting plans.

Affirmation 10

AUQA affirms CSU's identification of the need for more effective systems of managing academic workload.

Human Resources, page 52

A major review of academic workloads and of academic work at CSU was completed in 2004 following a staff Climate Survey in 2003. This involved extensive consultation with staff and resulted in a series of recommendations. The Audit Panel acknowledged this work but, given that the review was relatively recent, was unable to comment on any progress.

Implementation of the recommendations from the review of academic workloads began in 2004, with a report on progress promulgated in the first half of 2005. Improving academic workloads and enhancing the conditions of academic work have been adopted as a Key Strategic Priority for 2005 and 2006. This has resulted in major policy and budgetary initiatives including:

- provision of funding has been identified to improve staffing ratios;
- an initial analysis of the discipline and subject profile which has established goals and targets for Faculties for the renewal of the course profile;
- measures to enhance support for research that are expected to bring about a reduction in student : staffing ratios; and
- clarification of minimum expectations with regard to duties of academic staff.

Note: CSU's student : staff ratio improved in 2004 and again in 2005, reversing a trend of increasing ratios over recent years.

Managing academic workloads more effectively remains the highest priority at CSU. The review of academic work has resulted in a number of major ongoing initiatives:

- funding from 2006 to improve staffing ratios linked to renewal of the discipline profile and a reduction in the number of subjects (20%). The availability of this funding to the Faculties is subject to approval of faculty plans for subject reduction and faculty workforce plans;
- review of the University's calendar of sessions;
- review of course architecture; and
- allocation of funding from 2006 to improve senior staffing levels in priority research areas.