

## AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

### Quality Audit of Charles Sturt University (CSU)

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education with the responsibility of providing public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and assisting in enhancing the academic quality of these institutions.

AUQA carries out audits of higher education institutions and government accreditation authorities. In its audits, AUQA is concerned with the existence and effectiveness of those processes ('quality processes') that the organisation has in place to achieve its stated objectives, produce the desired outcomes and meet the needs of the institution's identified constituencies. 'Effectiveness' is judged by the results and standards achieved, and AUQA is also interested in actions taken by the organisation to improve its effectiveness.

A panel of AUQA quality auditors is carrying out an audit of Charles Sturt University, which has reported to AUQA its own appreciation of these issues in its Performance Portfolio. In addition to reviewing documents, the AUQA Panel interviews a range of people associated with the institution on its various campuses, and partners in other locations.

The Audit Panel will visit **CSU's Wagga Wagga campus between 12 and 15 October 2009**. It will meet a wide range of staff, students, and community representatives. The Audit Panel has selected numerous groups, committees and individuals to meet, and they will be invited to come and discuss issues with the Panel. The Panel has also kept a short period of its visit free to meet anyone else who feels they can assist the Panel in its work. During another short period of the visit, Panel members will walk around the organisation and meet some people in their place of work.

Each interview usually involves a group of people and can last for up to 45 minutes. Every attempt is made to ensure that everyone who meets the Audit Panel has an opportunity to speak. The Audit Panel will have some specific questions to ask, and there will not usually be time for more free-ranging discussion. Also, as part of its auditing process, the Audit Panel may ask questions that may not appear to be directly related to your specific role within the organisation.

All comments made to the Audit Panel are treated in strict confidence, and will not be attributed to individuals.

The purpose of the interviews is to help the Audit Panel verify what it has read in the documentation and gain a detailed understanding of how the organisation operates, rather than to test individual people's knowledge. Audits of any type are often associated with identifying problems. While this is necessary to achieve improvements, AUQA's audits are even more concerned with revealing and reporting on good practice and successes.

Student and staff complaints and appeal procedures come within the scope of these audits. However, AUQA's objectives give it no mandate for investigating individual cases or hearing appeals, and this would detract from its ability to provide an independent coherent focus on the quality performance of institutions. It would also be incompatible with AUQA's emphasis on encouraging and assisting the improvement of quality in the sector.

Soon after the Audit Visit, interviewees will receive a request to provide comments on the audit process by completing AUQA's online survey. The Audit Panel thanks all those who will be giving their time to assist in the audit process and survey.

For further information please see the AUQA website: [www.auqa.edu.au](http://www.auqa.edu.au)

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#### AUQA's Objectives:

1. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of:
  - the quality of the academic activities, including attainment of standards of performance and outcomes of Australian universities and other higher education institutions;
  - the quality assurance arrangements intended to maintain and elevate that quality;
  - compliance with criteria set out in the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*;and monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on the quality of outcomes in Australian universities and higher education institutions.
2. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of the quality assurance processes, procedures, and outcomes of State, Territory and Commonwealth higher education accreditation authorities including their impact on the quality of higher education programs; and monitor, review, analyse and report on the outcomes of those audits.
3. Publicly report periodically on matters relating to quality assurance, including the relative standards and outcomes of the Australian higher education system and its institutions, its processes and its international standing, and the impact of the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* on Australian Higher Education, using information available to AUQA from its audits and other activities carried out under these Objectives, and from other sources.
4. Develop partnerships with other quality agencies in relation to matters directly relating to quality assurance and audit, to facilitate efficient cross-border quality assurance processes and the international transfer of knowledge about those processes.