

Charles Sturt University's Cycle 2 AUQA Audit

Briefing Notes

The following notes are to 'brief' the University community on the role of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and its upcoming audit of Charles Sturt University.

AUQA

- Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)
- AUQA is an independent, not-for-profit national agency that promotes, audit and reporting on quality assurance in Australian Higher Education.
- 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.
- AUQA has responsibility for:
 - Quality audits of Higher Education institutions and accreditation authorities;
 - Reporting on performance and outcomes;
 - Assisting in quality enhancement;
 - Advising on quality assurance; and
 - Liaising internationally with quality agencies in other jurisdictions, for the benefit of Australian Higher Education.
- Cycle 1 is in some respects the 'starting point' for the Cycle 2 Audit.

AUQA's Cycle 1 Audit of Charles Sturt University

- CSU underwent its first Audit in July 2004 as part of the first cycle of audits.
- The outcomes of the Audit were reflected in an Audit Report, which was released in November 2004.
[The Audit Report is available at: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/universities/>]

- The University has maintained a Progress Report reflecting actions taken in response to issues raised in the Audit Report.
[CSU's Updated Progress Report, as at May 2009 is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/docs/AUQA_progress_report_may_2009.pdf]

Overview of Cycle 2 Audits

- Cycle 2 Audits have an increased emphasis on academic standards and outcomes, together with assessment of the extent to which the University is meeting external requirements.
- Although the Audit will use similar processes to the Cycle 1 Audit CSU experienced in 2004, there are some key differences in scope, these being:
 - An assessment of the progress made in addressing a sample of Recommendations and Affirmations from Cycle 1;
 - Review of significant changes to quality assurance and enhancement processes since Cycle 1;
 - Explicit assessment of the extent that institutional outcomes and standards are being achieved;
 - Explicit consideration of the extent to which requirements of external reference points are being met; and
 - Greater depth in the analysis of two themes.
 - Consultation with AUQA has resulted in the identification and scoping of two themes, these being *Internationalisation* and *Professional Education and Practice Based Learning*.
 - The themes have been selected with reference to the University's strategic objectives and associated academic risks.

[The scope for each theme is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/themes.htm]
- The conduct of the Audit will be the same as for Cycle 1. That is, an Audit Panel will make determinations on the points above through reference to and cross reference between:
 - The University's own self assessment, i.e. CSU's Cycle 2 Performance Portfolio;
 - Additional information collected, i.e. information on CSU's website, publications, internal policies, procedures, visits to campuses and partners, student and staff submissions etc; and
 - Interviews with students, staff and other stakeholders.

Charles Sturt University's Cycle 2 AUQA Audit

- CSU will undergo its Cycle 2 Audit in October 2009.

- A statement on compliance with National Protocols based upon a 'Desk Review' was submitted to AUQA in July 2008.
[The Desk Review is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/secure_docs/docs/desk_review_cycle_2.pdf]
- The University's Cycle 2 Performance Portfolio was submitted to AUQA in July 2009.
 - The Portfolio reflects the University's own self-evaluation and is in effect the starting point for the Audit.
[CSU's Cycle 2 Performance Portfolio is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/supplementary/]
- A 'Request for Additional Information' by AUQA will be fulfilled in two parts, the first being by 8 September 2009 and the second by 22 September 2009.
[CSU's response to the 'Request for Additional Information' is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/supplementary/further_info.htm]
- Prior to the 'main Audit Visit' a delegation of the Audit Panel will conduct an 'Offshore Visit' and an 'onshore Pre-Audit Visit' to selected partners and CSU campuses.
 - This may involve selected staff and students, and even external stakeholders, being interviewed.
- The 'main Audit Visit' is to be held over the four days, Monday 12 to Thursday 15 October, on the Wagga Wagga Campus.
 - This will involve interviews with staff, students and other stakeholders.
- As Visit Programs become available, they can be accessed from:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/staff_info/index.htm
- A preliminary timeline for CSU's Cycle 2 AUQA Audit is available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/auqa_audit/2009/timeline.htm

The Audit Process

- The Audit process is designed to be fair but challenging. The University will be challenged to provide evidence that:
 - We are clear about our goals;
 - We have strategies in place to achieve our goals;
 - We can demonstrate how well we are doing; and

- We have systematic processes in place for continuous improvement.
- The recurring 'questions' within the process are:
 - What are you trying to achieve?
 - How effective are you?
 - How do you know?
- We can expect that the Audit Panel to have read our Performance Portfolio and all supporting documentation very thoroughly. They will use the Portfolio to form impressions of strengths and weaknesses, areas that require further information and areas that will be investigated in depth. They will also identify inconsistencies, omissions and claims made without evidence.

Audit Visits

- A large number of people will be interviewed over the various visits.
- Interviewees will most likely include:
 - University Council members;
 - Staff with responsibilities relevant to the scope of the audit;
 - Students; and
 - Relevant external stakeholders.
- The majority of interviews will be conducted face to face with individuals or in small groups. Some interviews will be required to be held via teleconference or videoconference facilities.
- The interviews will be comprehensive and though that are not meant to cause anxiety, the Panel will certainly ascertain whether interviewees are familiar with:
 - The University's strategic direction and plans;
 - Policies, procedures, standards and outcomes; and
 - Commitment to continuous quality improvement.
- The purpose of the interviews includes:
 - To test the statements and descriptions made in the Portfolio;
 - To acquire further insight and evidence; and
 - To examine the thoroughness of planning, adequacy of support of staff and students, the intellectual atmosphere and the commitment to quality.

Message to the University Community

- Preparation for the AUQA Audit has been part of our own continuous quality improvement activities, including assessment of outcomes against institutional plans.

- The University Strategy 2007 - 2011 determines what we do and how we do it.
- We regularly undertake self-reviews of our activity as part of our PIRI cycle [Plan-Implement-Review-Improve]
- Celebrate what we've achieved in quality:
 - We have shown that we meet the National Protocols for Higher Education for establishment and regulations of Universities.
[See The Desk Review available at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/plandev/students_only/quality_assurance/secure_docs/docs/desk_review_cycle_2.pdf]
 - We can describe the scope and scale of CSU operations and progress we have made since the Cycle 1 AUQA Audit.
[Refer to Chapter 1 of the Cycle 2 Portfolio and CSU's Updated Progress Report]
 - We can show how we are tracking against our performance by reference to our plans and documentation of activities. This includes relevant 'external reference' to understand our processes and achievements in the context of the Australian Higher Education sector and to bring about the continuous improvement to which the University is committed.
 - We do compare ourselves to other institutions to see what is good or best practice (benchmarking).