

Academic Quality Assurance Policy

Section 1 - Objectives and Scope

(1) The Academic Quality Assurance processes of the University of New England (UNE) support academic excellence and ensure ongoing confidence in UNE's academic programs.

(2) This Policy defines a whole-of-institution quality assurance approach for:

- a. Identifying and managing risks to the standard and integrity of UNE's academic programs and outputs;
- b. Identifying and managing risks the quality of student learning opportunities; and
- c. Ensuring the effectiveness of systematic monitoring and continuous improvement activities.

(3) Within this Policy:

- a. Part A – defines the guiding principles of academic quality and the assurance approach;
- b. Part B – defines the academic quality assurance governance structure and accountabilities; and
- c. Part C – outlines the academic quality assurance management approach.

Part A - Academic Quality Assurance Model

(4) Academic quality assurance at UNE is guided by key principles:

- a. A quality education experience requires the provision of courses that are academically rigorous and align with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the strategic direction of UNE;
- b. Strategies for continuous improvement and quality assurance of academic activities, are developed within the context of its regulatory and statutory obligations, professional accreditation requirements and compliance with UNE's policies and procedures.
- c. Academic programs and student services are implemented in a consistent manner and undergo continuous improvement through regular application of internal performance indicators and external benchmarking activities.
- d. A commitment to an open, transparent and collaborative approach, where:
 - i. risks and improvement opportunities are identified early;
 - ii. communication of quality assurance outcomes; and
 - iii. key stakeholders are engaged in the development and implementation of improvement plans.
- e. That a risk based approach to quality assurance informs academic, financial, and organisational risk management; and
- f. An effective and efficient risk management approach where duties relating to academic quality are appropriately segregated and there is organisational independence of functions.

Academic Quality Assurance Model

(5) The Academic quality assurance is supported at all levels of the organisation, across the broad range of academic activities (research, teaching and learning, knowledge development, professional support) and is inclusive of academic

partnerships and arrangements between UNE and third party providers that contribute to the academic outcomes of the University.

(6) UNE's Academic Quality Assurance Model defines the assurance structure and accountabilities across the University for managing risks to academic quality and inform decision making. This model defines the relationship between assurance functions and defines how responsibilities are segregated:

- a. First Line Assurance – Ongoing self-monitoring of compliance with the academic policy and procedures at function level by areas responsible for the operational delivery of the education experience. Day to day identification and control of risks to quality.
- b. Second Line Assurance – Academic sub-committee oversight and management of risks to quality and provide guidance and advice to areas of the University responsible for delivery of education programs. Define the risk controls and provide compliance reporting against University academic quality standards.
- c. Third Line Assurance – Evaluation by internally independent and objective assurers. Completing thematic and education quality reviews and benchmarking. Provide advisory support to improve the academic quality assurance process.
- d. Fourth Line Assurance – External independent assurance and compliance reviews – typically government regulators and authorities mandated to manage academic quality at an industry level.

Table 1: Academic Quality Assurance Model

Assurance Level	1 st Line	2 nd Line	3 rd Line	4 th Line
Approach	Ongoing Self-monitoring of the risks to quality. Application of management controls (policies and procedures).	Identification and management of risks to quality. Independent compliance reporting to Committees.	Evaluation by internally independent assurers. Independent reporting.	Independent External Compliance Reviews.
Reporting	Academic Board Committees	Academic Board Committees Academic Board	Academic Board Council	Government Regulators
Focus Areas	Operational level monitoring, risk identification and mitigation Implement actions	Academic Governance Review Corporate Governance Review Institutional Level Monitoring and Review	Thematic Reviews Academic Program Reviews Third Party Provider (Academic Programs) Reviews Benchmarking	Regulatory and standards obligations.

(7) The governance, roles and responsibilities of the Academic Quality Assurance Model are defined in Parts B and C.

Part B - Academic Quality Assurance Governance

(8) Institutional level governance bodies with accountability for Academic Quality Assurance include:

- a. Council – Accountable for Corporate Governance. Assign authority to Council Committees (including Audit and Risk Committee) to provide review, advice and compliance monitoring;
- b. Academic Board – Accountable for Academic Governance to ensure effective academic oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training. Assign authority to Academic Board Committees (including Teaching and Learning Committee, Curriculum Committee, Research Committee and Graduate Research Subcommittee) to monitor and report on assurance;
- c. University-Wide Ethics Committees – Accountable for Ethics Governance (Human Research Ethics Committee

and Animal Ethics Committees);

- d. Faculty Level Committees: Accountable for Faculty, School and Research Governance, including Faculty Education Committees and Faculty Research Committees;
- e. Operational Governance Committees - Accountable for the quality of activities that support academic quality, including:
 - i. Academic Portfolio Executive Committee (APEC) for governance and oversight of UNE's academic portfolio, load allocation; coursework program resourcing; and
 - ii. Graduate Research Subcommittee for the quality of research induction, training, HDR student support and research supervisor support.

(9) Institutional level governance roles with accountability for Academic Quality Assurance include:

- a. Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer: Principle Academic Officer of the University, accountability for performance and quality of academic programs, right of veto on academic program matters with organisational resources implications;
- b. Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Accountability for academic staffing resources, academic quality for coursework programs and for the organisation of faculties to deliver quality teaching and learning and research. Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer's Delegate for coordinating key higher educational compliance;
- c. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research: Accountability for research quality and integrity, within Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs and research partnerships, collaborations and centres at UNE. Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer's Delegate for coordinating key research related compliance;
- d. Executive Principal Education Futures: Accountability for the quality of student academic support, teaching and learning, and operational management of compliance with standards associated with the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#).
- e. Executive Principal Student Experience: Accountable for the quality of student support, participation and engagement;
- f. Chief Operating Officer: Accountable for the quality of the learning facilities and infrastructure, ensuring that they are sufficient and appropriate to provide a quality learning experiences; and
- g. Executive Principal Brand Partnerships and Business Development: Accountability for international student recruitment and compliance with standards associated with [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#).
- h. Director, Education Quality: Accountable for the completion and reporting of academic program reviews and third party education provider reviews. Completion of other ad hoc reviews determined Director, Office of Strategy Management, Executive Principal or relevant member of the university senior executive.

Part C - Academic Quality Management Approach

(10) Academic Quality provides a foundation for excellence via the process of continuous improvement and is realised through the four-stage [UNE Quality Cycle](#) of Plan, Act, Evaluate, and Improve.

- a. 'Plan' includes defining what is intended to be achieved and determining an approach for achieving strategies and goals of the university.
- b. 'Act' includes actions undertaken to achieve strategies and goals of the university.
- c. 'Evaluate' includes monitoring and review, and internal and external benchmarking, designed to assess how the university is progressing against its strategies and goals, and demonstrate that quality has been attained or sustained.
- d. 'Improve' includes acting on the matters identified through evaluation, to more successfully meet the strategies and goals of the university, or to a higher standard.

(11) The UNE Academic Quality Assurance Model defines the focus areas and scope of responsibilities for delivering Plan, Act, Evaluate and Improve activities.

Table 2: Institutional Quality Assurance Focus Areas and Mechanisms

Focus Area / Purpose	Key Activities
<p>1. Corporate Governance Review:</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that corporate governance in place has oversight of academic performance consistent with TEQSA Guidance and the UNE Act.</p> <p>Corporate Governance provides assurance of strategic and continuity planning, risk management, financial management and risk factors, and the management of delegations as per the relevant legislation. This assurance includes regular self-monitoring and periodic external reviews of corporate governance functions at least every seven years</p>	<p>Confirm evidence of planning for academic quality and integrity.</p> <p>Review financial risk factors and determine impact on support for academic program delivery.</p> <p>Confirm evidence of assurance re compliance with academic quality standards, policies and processes and higher education regulations.</p> <p>Undertake periodic Governance Body Review defined in the UNE Governance Framework.</p>
<p>2. Academic Governance Review</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that academic governance in place is undertaking its functions to support academic quality and integrity within UNE's academic programs, and to advise the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer and Council of same.</p>	<p>Review of Academic Board and Committees re role in ensuring policies and frameworks for quality academic outcomes;</p> <p>Academic Board and Committees oversight of monitoring academic program quality and deliver and Institutional academic metrics and actions to support continuous improvement.</p>
<p>3. Institutional Level Monitoring and Review</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that UNE's institutional performance metrics relevant to academic quality assurance are being monitored and acted up as part of a continuous improvement approach.</p>	<p>Institutional Benchmark Performance Monitoring</p> <p>TEQSA (Domains 1- 7), AQF, HESA, AQF and ESOS;</p> <p>Higher Education Support Program Reviews e.g., HEPPP; Indigenous Tutorial Assistant Program; University Compact; Regional University Network program etc;</p>
<p>4. Thematic Reviews</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that UNE's strategic and operational activities that cross Divisions, Schools, Academic and Professional responsibilities are structured and functioning effectively. Assess current or emerging strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities to academic quality.</p> <p>Thematic reviews include assurance that:</p> <p>UNE has academic leadership over its academic pedagogy that support students to gain knowledge and is at the level commensurate with the programs of study.</p> <p>UNE's places and spaces are fit for purpose and support the delivery and student experience of academic programs.</p> <p>UNE as an institution and individual academic staff are engaged in scholarship and knowledge development activities that support and academic programs delivery.</p>	<p>Thematic Review are conducted on a rolling program scheduled and ad hoc basis in response to an identified risk or need.</p> <p>Thematic reviews are conducted at school and institutional level.</p> <p>School Review re performance; resources implement the strategy of the University, and is delivering quality outcomes in teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and student and staff performance.</p> <p>Faculty Review re performance against Faculty Plan; resources, strategic alignment, and assurance re quality outcomes in teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and student and staff performance.</p>
<p>5. Academic Program Reviews</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that UNE's academic programs are structured and functioning effectively.</p>	<p>QILT Review.</p> <p>Student Progress and completions Reporting.</p> <p>Course and Unit Reviews.</p>

Focus Area / Purpose	Key Activities
<p>6. Third Party Provider (Academic Programs) Reviews</p> <p>These reviews provide assurance that third party providers engaged by UNE are supporting academic programs delivery to the requisite quality standards set by and required by UNE so as to support student outcomes.</p>	<p>Third Party Provider (academic programs) quality reviews</p> <p>Third Party Provider (academic programs) performance audits</p>

(12) Individual Policies, where required, define the detailed approach for successfully delivering the key activities of the focus areas defined above.

Section 2 - Authority and Compliance

Authority

(13) The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer, pursuant to Section 29 of the [University of New England Act 1993 \(NSW\)](#), makes this University policy.

(14) The Policy Steward, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, is authorised to make Policies and associated information, that are consistent with this Policy, for the operation of this Policy.

Compliance

(15) UNE Representatives must observe it in relation to University matters.

(16) This Policy operates from the Effective Date.

(17) Previous policy on academic quality assurance and any related documents are replaced and have no further operation from the Effective Date of this Policy.

(18) This Policy confirms the University's commitment to quality and describe the approach for monitoring the professional accreditation requirements where applicable and statutory obligations under the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#), the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Thresholds Standards\) 2021](#), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#), the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) and National Code of Practice, [ELICOS Standards](#), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) \(updated 2018\)](#), the [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013](#) , [Australian Code of the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and the [University of New England Act 1993 \(NSW\)](#).

(19) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this Policy, the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer may approve an exception to this Policy where the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer determines the application of this Policy would otherwise lead to an unfair, unreasonable or absurd outcome. Approvals by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer under this clause must be documented in writing and must state the reason for the exception.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	20th January 2022
Review Date	20th January 2024
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer
Approval Date	20th January 2022
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Unit Head	Simon Evans Deputy Vice-Chancellor dvc@une.edu.au
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"UNE Representative" - Means a University employee (casual, fixed term and permanent), contractor, agent, appointee, UNE Council member, adjunct, visiting academic and any other person engaged by the University to undertake some activity for or on behalf of the University. It includes corporations and other bodies falling into one or more of these categories.

"Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)" - Is the national guidelines that establishes standards for Australian qualifications. Qualifications are given a level based on the depth of learning.

"Research" - Is the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. (Defined by the Australian Research Council)

"School" - Is an organisational unit comprising academic staff in related fields of study who are responsible for teaching and research in those academic fields together with support staff. Each School also has lead management for the design and delivery of the courses within its responsibility.

"Academic Governance" - Means the framework of policies, structures, relationships, systems and processes that collectively provide leadership to and oversight of the University's academic activities (teaching, learning and scholarship, and research and research training) at an institutional level.

"Effective Date" - means the Rule/Policy takes effect on the day on which it is published, or such later day as may be specified in the policy document.

"Faculty" - An organisational unit consisting of a group of related Schools, which is responsible for coordinating the management and quality of the teaching and research conducted by those Schools.