

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

AUQA AUDITS - 2007 ONWARDS Overview of Audit Cycle 2

Executive Summary

Context

In 2007, AUQA will finish auditing the current self-accrediting institutions (SAIs) and the accreditation agencies. From 2008, it will begin a second cycle of audits of these bodies (as well as auditing some institutions for the first time).

Suggestions for cycle 2 were sought and received from AUQA's constituency and via the review of AUQA. In deciding what to recommend to the AUQA Members on the nature of cycle 2, the Board of AUQA set out to achieve a balance between two objectives. On the one hand, it is important for the next audits to be sufficiently similar to the first ones to help to bed down QA processes and reinforce aspects that have become established in internal institutional processes, and because the system has proved to be effective. On the other hand, it is important for successive audit cycles to be different to avoid staleness, complacency and diminishing returns, to recognise the changing character of the system and the institutions, and to emphasise continuing improvement.

Detailed processes and advice for cycle 2 will be further developed by AUQA, informed by

- national briefing sessions with SAIs and HE Recognition Officers, and
- a sector-based reference group.

Cycle 2 Audits - Main Similarities to Cycle 1

- A fitness *for* purpose audit against institutional / agency objectives (recognising diversity of SAIs and consistency between agencies)
- An emphasis on quality enhancement / improvement
- Use of the ADRI framework
- Audit reports containing Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations
- Acknowledgement of the benefit and importance of self-review
- Avoidance of ranking systems
- Attention to international activities
- Good practices shared through mechanisms such as AUQA's Good Practice Database
- Approximately six-year audit cycle for SAIs

Cycle 2 Audits - Main Differences from Cycle 1

1. Update

- "Closing the loop" on recommendations and affirmations from cycle one audits
- Overview of main quality assurance procedures, with emphasis on changes since cycle one.
- Streamline (and attempt to reduce) documentation.

2. Standards, Benchmarking and Outcomes

- The fitness for purpose approach will explicitly encompass standards, performance and outcomes, guided by consideration of academic risk and its management.
- Greater emphasis on institutional standards and performance outcomes, with attention to benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes.
- Audits will investigate how academic standards are determined, applied, maintained, monitored and met.
- Greater use of external reference points.
- Evidence of the relation between processes and outcomes will be sought.

3. Audit Depth

- Identification of two thematic areas for detailed attention.

4. Audit Reports

- Recommendations and affirmations in audit reports, identifying areas requiring action, will be prioritised on a three or four-point scale (eg high, medium, low), as advice to the auditee.

5. Agencies

- Agencies will be audited in 2010.