

# Course and Subject Management Procedure - Course Reviews

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) The University will provide consistent principles and procedures to guide the University community in the introduction, review, revision and closure of courses.

(2) These Procedures are intended to streamline and ensure transparency and consistency in the regular review of courses.

## Section 2 - Scope

(3) Refer to the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#).

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) Refer to the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#).

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Course Reviews at La Trobe University

(5) There are two types of internal course reviews at the University:

- a. the annual Strategic Review
- b. the five-yearly Academic Review.

(6) Colleges will assume the costs associated with strategic and/or academic course reviews, including travel and accommodation and preparation of documents. There will be no charges for internally provided administrative services.

### Part A - Strategic Reviews of Courses

(7) Courses will be reviewed regarding their strategic value and sustainability at least once a year in a joint meeting of senior members of the College and the Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) of the Senior Executive Group.

### Information for Strategic Reviews of Courses

(8) Information that might be considered in CPSC deliberations includes:

- a. enrolments and completions

- b. popularity polls and performance in VTAC preferences
- c. ATAR scores
- d. distribution of Student Fee Types
- e. contribution of the course to the College/University strategic direction
- f. adequacy of relevant resources (staff, budget, space, ICT etc).

### **Responsibility for Strategic Reviews of Courses**

(9) The CPSC will initiate the strategic review of courses and identify the data for consideration in the meetings. CPSC will liaise with the relevant College regarding the review process to be undertaken.

### **Outcome of Strategic Reviews of Courses**

(10) The outcome of a strategic course review, as determined by CPSC or review panel may be:

- a. no change
- b. major, minor or substantial revision
- c. suspension or closure.

(11) In the event of either of the latter two outcomes, changes are to be processed via the relevant coursework committee and CPSC under the Course and Subject Revisions, Suspensions and Closures Procedure.

## **Part B - Academic Course Reviews**

(12) Academic Course Reviews are typically carried out every five years. No course can extend beyond seven years without having completed an Academic Course Review process except where:

- a. a course has been placed into teach out following closure approval
- b. it is intended that a course be closed or replaced by a substantially new course within the next 12 months.

(13) Courses that are subject to external or professional accreditation should have the reviews conducted in conjunction with one another whenever possible. The timing of the internal academic course review as well as detail concerning precise content requirements can be negotiated.

(14) For example, to assist in reducing workload, a College may prefer to submit to the internal course review panel, the external professional accreditation submission together with an addendum containing any agreed additional La Trobe course review requirements. Colleges may choose to review groups/clusters of courses during the same review process.

### **Out of Cycle Course Reviews**

(15) An Academic Course Review may be commenced at any time at the request of the College Pro Vice-Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor on the advice of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or CPSC.

### **Scheduling of Academic Course Reviews**

(16) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will arrange the development of an initial five year review program to ensure that all courses in the College are reviewed. A copy of the program is to be provided to the Academic Course Review Coordinator, Quality and Standards, for inclusion in the program of University reviews.

(17) By October of each year, the College Pro Vice-Chancellor will review the College program for the forthcoming five years and provide confirmation and/or updates to the Quality and Standards Office.

(18) For any newly approved courses, an academic course review must be conducted within five years of the first enrolment intake.

## **Inclusion in College Business/ Operational Plans and Calendar**

(19) Academic course reviews are to be included in the College Business/Operational Plan. The calendar of academic course reviews for each College will also be published on the College webpage and a consolidated University schedule on the [Academic Course Reviews Unite Site](#).

## **Review Criteria for Academic Course Reviews**

(20) Academic Reviews will principally be conducted against the elements of course design intended to ensure the alignment of teaching and learning activities, learning resources and support, assessment strategies, and feedback mechanisms in order to support student achievement of University, College and course learning outcomes to clear and appropriate standards.

## **Outcomes of an Academic Course Review**

(21) The recommendation by the review panel may be:

- a. re-accreditation
- b. re-accreditation with conditions
- c. no re-accreditation.

## **Preparation for Academic Course Reviews**

(22) It is the responsibility of the College to manage the preparation for any academic course review.

(23) College Pro Vice-Chancellors (in consultation with Heads of Schools) should establish a College Academic Course Review Team, including a Course Review Leader (usually one of the Course Coordinators), to prepare the academic review documentation required for each review of a course or group of courses. The significant work involved will need to be considered in workload management.

(24) Course review submissions should involve the input of academic staff involved in the delivery of the relevant course/s. Where more than one School or College is involved (for example, double degrees, or those courses involving more than one campus) coordinators from all relevant areas are to be consulted in the development of the submission.

(25) The Course Review Leader may seek assistance from the Planning and Institutional Performance Unit (PIPU) in interpreting data and from members of the Coursework Committee in preparing documentation.

## **Administrative Support to the College Academic Course Review Team**

(26) The College Academic Course Review Team should also include an administrative officer (usually one of the administrators supporting the courses for review) to assist with the preparation of the review submission and review interviews.

## **Submission Endorsement**

(27) The Course Review Submission must be approved by the relevant Associate PVC (Coursework) and College Pro Vice-Chancellor before being submitted to the Quality and Standards Office for distribution to the Course Review Panel.

## Submission

(28) Academic Course Reviews are conducted on the basis of a self-review. The self-review is structured to include information and analysis of:

- a. course profile and context; this will include, at a minimum, the design and content of the course, expected learning outcomes, and methods of assessment
- b. course and subject performance and quality assurance; this will include, at a minimum, student achievement of learning outcomes, and analysis of course performance indicators
- c. the future direction of the course; this will include, at a minimum, analysis of identified risks to the course, emerging developments in the field, and changing needs of students.

(29) Course performance indicators for Academic Reviews will include:

- a. student satisfaction
- b. demand and load, including load targets/projections
- c. student retention
- d. student performance/progression
- e. completion times and rates.

(30) The analysis of course performance indicators should include the following:

- a. analysis of student sub-groups to inform any improvements that may support the participation of such groups
- b. external referencing of retention, progression and completion data against comparable courses of study
- c. where a course is delivered via multiple modes of delivery, consideration of course performance in each mode.

(31) The Course Coordinator will usually be responsible for conducting the self-review and producing the submission document on the review template, in consultation with Subject Coordinators and staff involved in the delivery of the course.

## Panel Composition for Academic Course Reviews

(32) The Academic Course Review Panel will usually be comprised of at least three, and up to five, members, including the Panel Chair. Panel members may be selected from the following categories as appropriate to the course:

- a. an external academic with relevant discipline expertise and appropriate experience
- b. an internal academic with related discipline expertise and appropriate experience, not directly involved with the courses being reviewed
- c. a related professional or industry group
- d. member of La Trobe Learning and Teaching.

(33) An Academic Course Review will include review by an external expert. This can be achieved via one of the following options:

- a. at least one member of the panel is external to La Trobe University
- b. a recent (no older than two years) professional accreditation report is assessed by the Executive Director, PIPU as constituting review by an external expert
- c. an external peer-review of academic standards is conducted (templates and guidelines provided).

(34) Normally at least one panel member will have relevant expertise in curriculum design and learning and teaching

approaches.

(35) A Review Executive Officer will provide support to the panel.

(36) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will consult with the Chair of the Coursework Committee on proposed membership of the Academic Course Review Panel.

### **Panel Chair**

(37) The Panel Chair will be an academic level C or above and should be someone with no close relationship to the course being reviewed, and should normally be from the other College.

### **Category B Internal Panel Members**

(38) Internal Panel members should be an academic of the University with experience in curriculum design and learning and teaching approaches, and where possible, have knowledge from a broadly related discipline. However they should not be teaching into or directly involved with the course/s being reviewed.

### **Administrative Support to the Review**

(39) The Quality and Standards Office manages the overall course review process, including the provision of administrative support for the panel.

### **Terms of Reference for Academic Course Reviews**

(40) A model Terms of Reference for an Academic Course Review is available on the Course Lifecycles intranet site.

(41) If required, the College Pro Vice-Chancellor will consult with the Chair of the Coursework Committee and/or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on any significant adjustments proposed to the terms of reference.

### **Data for Academic Course Reviews**

(42) To assist Colleges with preparation of the academic course review submission, a comprehensive data pack will be provided by PIPU. This data set covers student demand, student profile, student retention, student satisfaction and student outcomes.

(43) In October each year, the Quality and Standards will provide PIPU with a list of all scheduled courses nominated for review in the coming year to enable the preparation of the relevant data packs.

(44) If deemed necessary, the Course Review Leader can also source additional data (eg: from external stakeholders) that is not already available through the PIPU data pack. Any requests for additional data may be made by the Course Review Leader to PIPU.

### **Preliminary Panel Meeting**

(45) The Academic Course Review Panel will meet to consider the academic course review submission and relevant data set. At that meeting it will also consider any other information required and also who should be interviewed and questions/issues to be raised during interviews. The external member(s) of the panel may participate in this meeting by phone.

### **Panel Interviews**

(46) The Panel may choose to convene to interview people considered relevant to its investigations. These may include:

- a. Course Coordinator/s and other staff involved in the delivery of the course
- b. current students
- c. graduates
- d. staff teaching in the course(s), including those from multiple locations and/or schools where the course is offered
- e. the relevant Head/s of School.

## **Final Panel Meeting**

(47) The final afternoon of the interview schedule will be set aside for the Panel to discuss their findings and assist in developing an initial draft of the Panel Report.

## **Panel's Report on Academic Course Reviews**

(48) The Chair of the Academic Course Review Panel, will prepare the report using the report template, in consultation with the other Panel members. The findings may include Commendations and Recommendations with a brief rationale for these commendations or recommendations.

(49) It will also contain the Panel's conclusion on whether the course should be reaccredited without changes, reaccredited with conditions or not re-accredited.

## **Draft Report**

(50) The report as drafted will be provided to the Course Review Leader to allow them the opportunity to request amendments to any factual errors, after which the report will be finalised.

## **Finalising the Report**

(51) Once the Academic Course Review report is finalised, it is signed-off by the Panel Chair and presented to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework) and the College Pro Vice-Chancellor. The Quality and Standards Office will facilitate this exchange.

## **Reporting and Fulfilment of any Conditions**

(52) Evidence of the completion of actions which have been made a condition for course re-approval must be presented to Academic Board via the University Coursework Committee at least three months prior to the expiration of the course's approval period, as defined by Academic Board at the time of review.

(53) Heads of Schools are responsible for ensuring that all conditions of re-approval of a course are fulfilled by the deadline and for providing reports to the relevant Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework).

(54) Each Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework) reports to the Quality and Standards Office and to the University Coursework Committee on the completion of conditional actions.

(55) The Quality and Standards Office maintains a register of conditions and reports to the University Coursework Committee where conditions have not been met in the specified time. The Committee may grant the relevant School(s) extensions for the completion of these actions, or revoke course approval for new enrolments until the conditions are met.

## **Non-Reaccreditation**

(56) In the event of the Panel deciding not to recommend re-accreditation of the course, the College should submit course closure documentation to the relevant committees according to the processes outlined in the Course and Subject Revisions, Suspensions and Closure Procedures.

## Appeals Against Panel Decision

(57) Appeals against non-re-accreditation or a shortened accreditation period may be made to the Education Committee, supported by appropriate evidence. The bases for appeal are detailed in the Course Lifecycles – Course Review Guidelines.

## College Action Plan

(58) In consultation with members of the College/s and School/s, the Course Review Leader will prepare a response to recommendations contained in the report, using the Action Plan template.

## Review Report Consideration and Approval

(59) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will submit the final academic course review report, and the Action Plan, to College Academic Committee and subsequently to the Coursework Committee and Academic Board for consideration, endorsement and final approval. A copy is also to be provided to the Quality and Standards Office.

## Publication of Review Outcomes

(60) Once approved by Academic Board, the Quality and Standards Office will publish the completed report and action plan on the Academic Course Reviews Unite Site. The 12 month update to the Action Plan will also be published after its approval.

## Final Outcomes of the Review

(61) Within 12 months of the approval of the report by Academic Board, the College Course Review Leader will update the Action Plan template detailing outcomes for submission to College Academic Committee and subsequently to the Coursework Committee and Academic Board for consideration, endorsement and final approval. A copy is also to be provided to the Quality and Standards Office.

## Report Storage and Distribution

(62) The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for lodging all relevant review documentation in the University's Records and Archives Services and posting the summary report of completed course reviews on the [Academic Course Reviews Unite Site](#).

# Section 5 - Definitions

(63) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- a. Strategic Course Reviews: consider the strategic fit, financial sustainability, and demand for courses.
- b. Academic Course Reviews: consider the strategic fit and academic merit of courses, alignment to principles of good course design and indicators of student success and satisfaction.
- c. Academic Merit: effectiveness in promoting high quality, meaningful, and long-lasting learning.

# Section 6 - Related Documents

## Forms and Guidelines

(64) More information about course reviews can be sourced from the [Course Reviews](#) page on the intranet.





## Status and Details

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