School Review Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

Purpose/ Objectives

(1) To provide a basis for formal quality and strategic review of academic Schools. The review will provide an evidence-based assessment of the academic performance of a School and its contributions to the objectives of both the College and University. Reviews also consider the effectiveness of the internal management and operations of the School.

Preamble

(2) Reviews of Schools will normally be conducted on a five year cyclic basis. The review will provide a basis for quality assurance of a School in relation to its academic activities, organisation and management and the resourcing of these to ensure alignment with the University's Strategic Plan.

(3) A calendar of planned reviews will be published, and may be varied at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor. An out of cycle review may be commissioned at the Vice-Chancellor's discretion or upon the advice of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

General

(4) Provision for formal reviews of Schools is an important element of the University's planning and quality assurance framework. Generic terms of reference are provided, which are customised, as required, by the Vice-Chancellor.

Section 2 - Scope

(5) All Schools are covered by this Policy.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(6) Reviews of Schools will normally be conducted on a five year cyclic basis. A calendar of planned reviews will be published, and may be varied at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor. The timing of reviews will take account, to the extent possible of planned professional accreditation visits and other similar external reviews.

(7) An out of cycle review may be commissioned at the Vice-Chancellor's discretion or upon the advice of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

(8) A Review of a School will:

   a. critically evaluate the current performance of the School, including an assessment of performance over time in all areas of activity (learning and teaching, research and community engagement) and relative to comparable schools nationally;
   b. assess the extent to which School's activities support the objectives of the College Business Plan, and the

University's Strategic Plan and related plans;

c. consider the efficiency and effectiveness of allocated resource utilisation;

d. identify actions to improve performance;

e. provide advice on the future direction of the School, including course portfolio, research development and staffing profile, noting developments within the University, relevant academic disciplines and the wider industry, professions and community.

Section 4 - Procedures

Purpose of Review

(9) A Review of a School will:

a. critically evaluate the current performance of the School, including an assessment of performance over time in all areas of activity (learning and teaching, research and community engagement) and relative to comparable schools nationally;

b. assess the extent to which School's activities support the objectives of the College Business Plan, and the University's Strategic Plan and related plans;

c. consider the efficiency and effectiveness of allocated resource utilisation;

d. identify actions to improve performance;

e. provide advice on the future direction of the School, including course portfolio, research development and staffing profile, noting developments within the University, relevant academic disciplines and the wider industry, professions and community.

Timing of Review

(10) School reviews will be conducted cyclically, normally on a five year basis. A calendar of planned reviews will be published, and may be varied at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor.

(11) The timing of reviews will take account, to the extent possible of planned professional accreditation visits and other similar external reviews.

Commissioning the Review

(12) A review is formally commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor.

(13) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), supported by the Planning and Institutional Performance Unit, will make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor with respect to review timing, terms of reference and panel membership.

(14) The Vice-Chancellor will inform the Senior Executive Group, the Academic Board (via Academic Quality Committee) and the University Council when a review has been commissioned.

(15) The Vice-Chancellor will issue formal invitations to Panel members, and approve any customisation of the Generic Terms of Reference.

Review Costs

(16) Costs associated with the review, including the travel and accommodation costs of the review panel, will be borne by the School under review.

Composition of the Review Panel

(17) Each Review Panel will include:

a. External Chair who will be a senior academic from a relevant academic discipline. The Chair will be supported by, and work closely with, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Executive Officer supporting the Review in the performance of this role
b. Up to two further members typically from outside La Trobe with a background in a relevant discipline or profession, one of whom being an experienced Head of School from another University
c. Senior La Trobe Academic drawn from a school from the alternative College nominated by the La Trobe Academic Board
d. Executive Officer nominated by the Executive Director, Planning and Governance to provide support to the panel

(18) Panel members will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Formal Appointment of the Review Panel

(19) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will provide recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor regarding an appropriate Chair and membership for each Panel.

(20) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of School will be invited to comment to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), in confidence, on a proposed short-list of potential panel members so that any potential conflicts of interest can be addressed.

(21) The Planning and Institutional Performance Unit will provide support for this process.

Role of the Head of School

(22) The Head of School has overall responsibility for the preparation of the self-review document. The School will receive support from the Planning and Institutional Performance Unit in the provision of data to underpin the School's analysis.

(23) The self-review document will be submitted to the Review Panel via the Executive Officer at least six weeks before the panel's site visit.

(24) The Executive Officer will ensure the self-review document is made available to La Trobe staff via the University intranet, and made available on request to relevant external stakeholders.

(25) The Head of School will meet with the review panel during the site visit.

(26) The Head of School will nominate an administrative officer who will be allocated to support the logistics for the review.

Role of the School Administration Officer

(27) The nominated School Administration Officer will work with the panel Executive Officer to make detailed arrangements for the smooth-running of the panel site visit, including calendar invitations, room bookings and catering.

Role of the College Pro Vice-Chancellor

(28) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will be invited to provide comment to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on

possible panel members.

(29) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will approve the self-review document prepared by the School prior to its submission, and will meet with the review panel during the site visit.

(30) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will approve the draft plan prepared by the Head of School prior to its submission to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

(31) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor plays a key role in supporting the Head of School in the implementation of the agreed Action Plan.

Role of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

(32) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) plays a key role in overseeing the review process, including:

  a. advising the Vice-Chancellor on the scheduling and commissioning of reviews and the appointment of review panels;
  b. ensuring that review panels are appropriately briefed on the nature and intended outcomes of the review processes and on the La Trobe operating context;
  c. approving the self-review document prior to its submission to the review panel;
  d. approving the panel's site visit schedule;
  e. meeting with the review panel;
  f. receiving the draft written panel report and working with the review panel, Head of School, College PVC and other staff as necessary in finalising the report;
  g. overseeing the progress of action planning and implementation.

Role of the Review Panel

(33) The Review Panel will:

  a. consider the self-review portfolio prepared by the School;
  b. liaise and/or meet with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) throughout the review process to discuss/seek any required additional guidance;
  c. consider any additional information it may wish to request of the School;
  d. issue a general invitation to the University community to make written submissions to the panel;
  e. where appropriate, invite submissions from particular members of the University community and from external groups and individuals;
  f. convene for up to three days to conduct interviews with students and key stakeholders including University management and School staff and review relevant documentation;
  g. draft recommendations on the final day of the visit;
  h. meet with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), College Pro Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor at the conclusion of the visit to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations;
  i. with the assistance of the Executive Officer, prepare and submit a final written report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and then the Vice-Chancellor within six weeks of the site visit. The review report will be prepared in accordance with the specifications in the Reviews Handbook; and
  j. with the assistance of the Executive Officer, prepare and submit a final written feedback report to the Head of School.

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Role of the Executive Officer, PIPU

(34) PIPU will appoint an appropriately qualified person to act as Executive Officer to the review panel. This person may be a PIPU staff member, or drawn from another area within La Trobe. The Executive Officer to the panel will provide professional advice and administrative support to the panel.

(35) The Executive Officer will:

   a. support the panel in the development of an appropriate site visit schedule and liaise with the school in practical arrangements for interviews;
   b. book the travel and accommodation for panel members;
   c. ensure the self-review document is made available to La Trobe staff via the University intranet, and made available on request to relevant external stakeholders;
   d. coordinate the call for written submissions;
   e. coordinate the provision of information and answers to questions that the panel may have prior to the site visit;
   f. participate in the site visit, taking notes of interviews and supporting the panel's work; and
   g. draft the review report, taking account of panel member's feedback

(36) The role of the Executive Officer is fully specified in the Reviews Handbook.

Role of the Planning and Institutional Performance Unit

(37) The School will receive support from the Planning and Institutional Performance Unit (PIPU) in the provision of data to underpin the self-review portfolio, including comparative data where available. PIPU can also assist by providing advice on drafts of the self-review document.

(38) PIPU oversees the work of the panel executive officers, and provides support to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in all aspects of the reviews process.

Self-Review Process and Self-Review Document

(39) The self-review process provides an opportunity for critical self-assessment by the School, and should identify areas of achievement and success, as well as areas for improvement. Self-assessment focuses on both current and future performance, and includes a critical examination of how the School can contribute most effectively to the College's and University's strategic objectives. The School being reviewed will prepare a self-review document to summarise its performance in relation to the review's Terms of Reference, drawing on appropriate comparative data.

(40) The self-review portfolio will:

   a. address the Terms of Reference;
   b. compare the School performance in key areas, in line with the Terms of Reference, against national data-sets and against at least two comparable schools at other Australian universities; and
   c. focus on future performance through an analysis of the School's areas of strength and those requiring development.

(41) The self-review document will be no longer than 20 A4 pages, excluding appendices, and must address the Terms of Reference for the review.

(42) The self-review document allows the School to reflect upon and analyse operations in order to optimise future performance. Consequently, the focus of the submission is to identify future directions and strategic intentions for the School. However, to set the context for the review, it is important to briefly address the School's history and its present circumstances with a focus on factors that have contributed to the current operating environment and

potential future outlook of the School.

(43) The self-review document should include:

a. an Executive Summary of the submission;
b. the history of the School;
c. the present circumstances of the School;
d. self-evaluation (with supporting evidence) of the current activities and outcomes of the School and its future plans for each Term of Reference; and
e. appendices (as outlined below).

(44) The self-review document should be used to demonstrate ways in which national standards as articulated by the Higher Education Standards Panel.

(45) Core performance data will be sourced with the support of PIPU. Three year trend data should be provided as a default, with relevant comparative data wherever possible.

(46) The following information should be included in the self-review document as appendices

(47) Planning, Budget and Review

a. current year School Business Plan;
b. current year School budget;
c. analysis of end of year financial outcome for last three years;
d. most recent report against School performance indicators and School Productivity Statement; and
e. a report on the implementation of recommendations from any previous School review or relevant discipline reviews conducted in the past five years.

(48) Staffing Profile

a. organisational chart showing key academic and administrative leadership positions in the School (with position titles and names, level and FTE);
b. staff demographic data showing age, gender and length of service for both academic and professional staff;
c. for academic staff only, staff qualifications and skill-base and identifying Established Productive Researcher/Early Career Researcher status;
d. staff professional development / training / career development plans;
e. most recent Academic Workload Planning System data;
f. staff succession plan (where available); and
g. report of most recent Staff Climate Survey data and summary of actions taken;

(49) Course Portfolio

a. summary of coursework profile at sub-bachelor, bachelor and postgraduate levels, and strategy for its ongoing development, including strategy for increasing flexibility of offerings;
b. summary analysis of recent market research into the positioning, differentiation and profile of the School's courses;
c. terms of reference and membership of Course Advisory Committees operated by the School, and minutes for past three meetings
d. course performance data including trends in load (all liability categories) against target, enrolments, student equity measures, student preferences, median ATAR and number of ATAR 80+, retention, Course Experience

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Questionnaire student satisfaction and Graduate Destination Survey data (last three years);

e. list of course titles of all professionally accredited courses and status of accreditation;

f. summary report of Student Feedback on Subjects results (last three semesters) and improvement priorities; and

g. list of internal and external teaching awards/grants received in the past five years showing name, purpose and amount;

(50) Research and Research Training

a. statement of School research strengths and their relationship to University Research Focus Areas and Research Programs;

b. trends in School research income and research publications (last five years) and relevant ERA data;

c. performance in national competitive grant rounds including number of applications submitted, success rate and dollar value of grants secured;

d. trends in HDR student load against target and student satisfaction (last three years); and

e. number and names of staff qualified to act as principal supervisors of HDR students;

(51) Engagement

a. summary of community engagement activities and outcomes (last three years)

(52) Infrastructure

a. asset register including major equipment and IT infrastructure; and

b. space report showing floor area, space utilisation and space quality.

Publication of Written Submissions to the Review

(53) With the exception of submissions clearly marked 'CONFIDENTIAL', written submissions to the review panel will be made available on the University intranet, accessible to staff of the University. Submissions will be made available to the review panel at least one week before the site visit.

Arrangements for Site Visit Schedule

(54) The panel's site visit schedule is prepared by PIPU, with input from the School under review and the review panel members. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approves the final site visit schedule.

(55) The site visit schedule, room bookings and invitations to interviewees will be coordinated by the allocated School Administration Officer and the panel Executive Officer.

Report of the Panel

(56) The review report will be prepared in accordance with the Review Handbook. Within six weeks of the site visit a draft report will be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who will request the Head of School to check the report for matters of fact as well as circulate the draft to other staff at the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)'s discretion, for comment. The report will then be returned to the Panel for consideration of comments and final sign-off by the Panel Chair.

(57) The Panel will submit the final report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) who will receive the report and make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor.

(58) The Vice-Chancellor will provide the Head of School and relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor with a copy of the

Panel's report and invite the preparation of an Action Plan, using the approved pro forma. The draft Action Plan will first be submitted by the Head of School to the College Pro Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for consideration. The final version of the Action Plan will be submitted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to the Vice-Chancellor for approval.

Scope of the Review Report

(59) The Panel's report is intended to be primarily focussed on the activities of the School. During the process the Panel may identify issues outside the School that impact on its capacity to fulfil its mission. Recommendations related to such issues will be included in the Panel's Report. At the time of preparing the Action Plan the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will seek input from the university officer with accountability for that area to determine the action that needs to be taken and these details will be included in the Action Plan.

Distribution of the Panel Report

(60) The Head of School will make the report available to members of the School and consult with School members as appropriate in the development of the Action Plan.

School Response to the Report – Action Plan

(61) The Action Plan will respond directly to the recommendations made by the Panel, and will be prepared in accordance with the format provided by PIPU.

(62) Where these relate to matters outside the School the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will seek input from the University officer with accountability for that area and include the University actions in the draft Action Plan submitted by the Head of School.

(63) The Action Plan will be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) within one month of the invitation to the Head of School. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will provide initial feedback on the draft Action Plan and will submit the final Action Plan to the Vice-Chancellor for formal approval.

Reporting on Review Outcomes

(64) The Action Plan and the Panel's Review Report will be presented to Senior Executive Group for noting. The Vice-Chancellor will advise Council and Academic Board (via Academic Quality Committee) of the review findings and recommendations, and of implementation of the Action Plan.

Implementation of Action Plans

(65) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor and the Head of School have a responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

(66) Progress Reports – The School will provide the Vice-Chancellor, through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), with a consolidated report of progress against each relevant review recommendation at 12 and 18 months and each following 12 months until such time as the next review.

(67) The 12 and 18 monthly Progress Reports will be provided to Senior Executive Group; and a summary report provided to Academic Board (via Academic Quality Committee) and Council for noting via the Vice-Chancellor. This process will be facilitated by PIPU.

Records Management

(68) All confidential submissions, drafts of the review report, and notes taken during the review, will be returned by panel members to the secretariat upon completion of the review for confidential disposal.

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(69) Records Services will retain a copy of the Panel report and associated documentation and submissions.

(70) An Executive Summary of the Panel's report, together with the Panel's recommendations, will be posted on the University intranet.

Section 5 - Definitions

(71) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

a. Action Plan: Usually in tabular form, details planned responses to recommendations, responsible persons and timelines for action.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Vice-Chancellor; Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); College Pro Vice-Chancellors; Heads of School; Executive Director, Planning and Governance.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); Academic Board (via Academic Quality Committee); University Council; and Senior Executive Group.

Status and Details

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