
A Description and Critical Appraisal of the Operation of the Academic Senate

Office of Academic Governance

Dr Nick Drengenberg
Academic Secretary

The terms 'Senate' and 'Academic Senate' are used interchangeably and refer to The Senate in its entirety i.e. all of its committees and processes.

Quality enhancements relating to Senate, deriving from the Cycle 1 audit, may be found at: http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academicsenate/qualityenhancements.htm

This report attempts to summarise the activity of Senate across the University in general terms, structured using the main academic regulation areas. For each area a list of identified issues has also been compiled. Following this critical description is an assessment of Senate's performance against a set of benchmarks identified by AUQA. Finally there is some description of Cycle 2 audits already completed for other universities.

Senate has responded comprehensively to recommendations from the Cycle 1 audit. Documentation of this response is available separately. It is also in the middle of a self-review, described in some detail in section 2 and more comprehensively in other separate documentation. This review derived from ongoing internal discussion about the role of Senate, the Cycle 1 audit and also from recommendations of the Work Process Improvement (WPI) project.

Dominant themes which emerge from all of this work, in relation to AUQA, are as follows.

Standards, Benchmarking – it is obvious that the Cycle 2 audit will focus very heavily on how Senate sets standards, how it then evaluates performance against these and to what extent it does this both internally and externally. External standards and benchmarking are an area of high risk (in AUQA terms) for CSU, as there has not been a strong tradition here of building explicit external reference points into academic policy.

There is some fairly substantial external benchmarking going as a result of course design and review, and the work of the UCPC. Also disciplines themselves add a strong external dimension to academic activity. AUQA though is also focused upon assessment standards, such as "how is a CSU HD comparable with a USyd HD?" Senate has no external benchmarking built into its awarding of grades or assessment policy. It also applies no University-wide assessment standards in the application of grades, and has no single approved moderation process (although moderation is used, and is often very well done).

While CSU is getting better at collecting key data, questions will likely be asked about the extent to which it analyses the data productively and then follows up on this analysis. (It might also be worthwhile to note that AUQA itself questions the achievability of much of the work it's being asked to do by government on standards. And that some of the standards will only be meaningful within a sector-wide agreed system, which doesn't exist.)

Governance - Although Senate has been working towards a better understanding of the way it should operate and interact with the rest of the institution, there remains a fairly dominant perception within the institution of Senate being somewhat lumbering and cumbersome, and insufficiently nimble to be properly involved in the sort of modern (particularly commercial) activity universities engage with. This perception isn't matched by the reality of the range of decision-making mechanisms Senate can draw upon, many of which are extremely efficient and fast. It might also be fair to say that many staff do not have any sort of clear understanding of what Senate does, and how it does it (but see below).

AUQA also applies an inconsistent framework to its analysis of academic governance. On the one hand it looks for evidence of extensive, widespread engagement of academic staff with the Senate. On the other it looks for evidence of the ability to make quick decisions. In practice just about every group and society in the West has developed representative governance mechanisms in an attempt to marry these two requirements, and Senate at CSU is no different. But this will always mean that a fairly large number of people governed by a particular body will be substantially in the dark as to the specific details of what it does, and this is a defining feature of representative governance, rather than a weakness. CSU should be able to articulate this tension with AUQA.

Reporting – Senate will need to more carefully define what information it wishes to have reported back to it as part of its quality assurance role, and then what it might do with this information. This question is part of the Senate self-review.

Compliance – compliance with Senate policy relies very heavily upon embedding decisions within operational procedure. However there is evidence that staff, both within Divisions and Faculties, vary such procedure without an understanding of its link to Senate policy.

Equivalence – equivalence of standards and application of policy across all cohorts and locations can be a bit of a leap of faith exercise. Until now Senate has had no role in vetting agreements, for example. Where administration of such offerings has been mainstreamed there is less of an issue, as policy is embedded within procedure.

INTRODUCTION	1
CONTENTS.....	3
LEGISLATION, GOVERNANCE	5
IDENTIFIED ISSUES FROM THE SELF-REVIEW.....	5
COLLEGIAL DEBATE & LEADING DISCUSSION	6
COMMUNICATION OF POLICY & DECISIONS	8
AUDITING AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	9
DEALING WITH 'EXTRAORDINARY MATTERS'	11
ACADEMIC FREEDOM.....	11
UCPC.....	11
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	14
ADMISSION.....	17
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	19
CREDIT	21
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	22
ENROLMENT	24
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	25
ASSESSMENT	27
Policy	27
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	30
Regulations	31
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	33
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT	35
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	37
ACADEMIC PROGRESS	38
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	39
GRADUATION	40
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	43
HIGHER DEGREE PROGRAMS.....	44
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	47
COURSES, SUBJECTS.....	48
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	57

PRIZES.....	60
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	61
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS	62
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	63
STUDENT EVALUATION	64
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	66
OTHER POLICY AREAS	67
IDENTIFIED ISSUES.....	68
AUQA BENCHMARKS	69
AUQA STANDARDS	79
CYCLE 2 AUDITS	80

Senate Self-Review

The Academic Senate has been undertaking a review of its role within the University. This review has involved discussion with the University Council and senior management, and includes matters of accountability, delegations, academic governance and academic freedom. This review was partly motivated by the Cycle 1 AUQA audit, but also by ongoing issues with the way Senate operates within the University. At the same time there has been a multi-faceted awareness campaign amongst staff on the role of the Academic Senate, and a change of title of the Academic Secretariat to the Office of Academic Governance, to further emphasise the shift in thinking.

Acts, By-Laws, Rules

The main legal instruments which determine the existing governance arrangements for the Academic Senate are as follows.

- The Charles Sturt University Act (1989)
- The Charles Sturt University By-Law (2005)
- The Governance (Academic Senate) Rule No.6 (2006)

Each of these legal instruments determines aspects of the role of the Senate within CSU. In the most general terms, they establish the Senate as effectively a sub-committee of the University Council, with broad powers of quality assurance in all academic matters at the University. The authorities delegated to the Senate range from an advisory function through to the creation and implementation of policy.

Identified Issues from the Self-Review

Key questions under discussion have included the following. Most of these were also identified as issues by the Cycle 1 audit. Senate has responded separately to the Cycle 1 audit.

- Collegial debate and leading university discussion
- Communication of policy and decisions

- Auditing and reporting arrangements
- Dealing with 'Extraordinary Matters'
- Academic Freedom

Collegial Debate & Leading Discussion

As part of its review, the Academic Senate identified an issue also identified by Jeanette Baird and David Woodhouse¹.

Rather, our comments point to a need for Boards to distinguish between advising as a committee of experts and expressing the views, not necessarily expert, of a collective academic citizenry.

A difficulty for the Senate at CSU and for similar bodies at other universities is in knowing when an issue is 'academic' and therefore within its sphere of responsibility. Most issues confronting modern universities are hybrids of academic, governance and management concerns, including resources, risk management, infrastructure etc.

Accordingly the Senate has considered a model whereby the full range of issues comes to the Academic Senate for debate, including at the earliest, formative stages of any proposed change. The contribution of the Senate to debates that are not seen as strictly 'academic' is then as a collective voice, without any necessary authority over the outcomes. Where Senate has concerns about any proposal that are outside its traditional area of authority, it would refer these to management or the University Council for consideration.

Importantly membership of the Senate includes senior management and senior Faculty management. These members also chair many of Senate's senior sub-committees such as Faculty Boards, the Academic Programs Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, Research Management Committee and Board of Graduate Studies. Conversely the Presiding Officer of the Senate sits on senior management committees of the University, and is also a member of the University Council. These arrangements ensure a tight integration of approach on academic governance and management issues.

The Office of Academic Governance as the administrative arm of the Academic Senate provides the main support to Senate in carrying out its functions. Historically this support has been very heavily weighted towards the servicing of committees. There have been significant changes to the operation of some key committees, such as the University Course Planning Committee and Academic Programs Committee, to facilitate a shift to a more focused and strategic approach (see the section on auditing and reporting arrangements).

¹ Dooley, A (2007). Thematic Analysis: The Role of Academic Boards in University Governance. AUQA.

It would be foolish to pretend that the majority of staff, academic and general, have a detailed understanding of governance both within CSU and the wider sector. Governance is traditionally poorly understood, including within the wider community at the more political level of governance. CSU has a representative model of governance, rather than the more direct convocation model of a Senate comprising hundreds or sometimes even thousands of academic staff. (Although it is important to realise that “Academic Senate” includes an extensive network of sub-committees within the Faculties themselves, meaning that its reach is very large and is not indicated simply by looking at the senior, central body and its deliberations.) This model allows for faster collegial decisions, but does result in a certain amount of apathy and ignorance of processes.

It could also be argued that representative processes are in large part designed to allow for a significant amount of delegation of responsibility for governance matters to representative bodies and their members. In that light it is less of a concern when individual members of the university lack a detailed understanding of its academic governance arrangements. It is also unreasonable to expect a university to have solved some of the problems with representative governance that remain unsolved in the wider community, and at CSU the smaller Senate has been specifically designed to balance collegiality with the need to make timely decisions. This is particularly important given the bicameral nature of university governance, and the comments from many AUQA audits seem unreasonable in expecting academic governance to be both engaging of all staff *and* timely in the business sense.

Since the 2004 audit the University’s understanding of the relationship between representative bodies such as the Senate and fora such as the VCF has matured. There is now a deeper understanding of the way in which these two collegial mechanisms complement rather than oppose each other. As noted in the Cycle 1 audit, “A Challenge for the fora is ensuring that the ideas generated in these groups are harnessed appropriately into the decision-making and policy setting mechanisms of the University.” This challenge is being met.

It is important to note that Faculties have additional committees which consider matters within Senate’s remit, such as learning and teaching committees. These are not serviced by the Office of Academic Governance as they have not been formally established as committees of the Academic Senate, but they have a relationship with both Senate policy and Senate’s own learning and teaching committee.

Communication of Policy & Decisions

The Cycle 1 audit noted that CSU has very good ‘top down’ communication mechanisms. It also noted that many staff seemed unaware of the role of Senate and of its policies and decisions.

The same complaint is common to other parts of the University as well. For many years Senate has had dedicated action sheets for decisions, targeting those staff and sections who ‘need to know’ of its specific decisions. It has also in more recent times supplemented these with communication and implementation plans for each of its decisions.

More generally Senate identified that communication and implementation of decisions was hampered by the absence of any accountability for academic policy-based decisions within academic duty statements. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has recently rectified this loophole in conjunction with Deans and Human Resources.

Academic Senate has for many years maintained an Academic Manual, both in hard copy and online. This is the official repository of all Academic Senate policy. The Academic Manual is a very large publication, reflecting the volume of Academic Senate policy. Senate has agreed to simplify policy, partly by separating each regulation area into policy, procedure and delegations, with the potential for guidelines for different users as well. This work has commenced. Procedures will have significant flexibility to be tailored to the operational requirements of Faculties and Divisions, within the broader outcomes and standards specified within policy.

Senate is also mindful of the need to balance communication with information overload. For this reason its communication has historically been precisely targeted, with more general communication left to members within their respective Faculties and Divisions.

In the past year the Office of Academic Governance has developed a website for the Academic Senate (at http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academicsenate/). The site centralises and makes accessible a range of different information about the Senate, including its terms of reference and membership, copies of discussion papers and reports, and details of quality enhancement activities. Note that this site is still under development and new material is always being added.

Auditing and Reporting Arrangements

The Cycle 1 audit identified a need for Senate to have greater focus in its audit activities, including the need to coordinate the different audit activities of its sub-committees. It suggested that the central audit committee of the Senate (currently the Academic Senate Audit Committee) should assume responsibility for this coordination.

The audit committee is now asked to undertake a wide-ranging review or audit of Senate operation every five years, and to recommend changes as appropriate.

At the same time some sub-committees such as the Academic Programs Committee (APC) have undergone extensive re-structuring to allow a much greater focus upon audit activity. The Cycle 1 audit identified the very heavy workload of the APC, and subsequently Senate decided to significantly streamline and re-focus its course approval activity, while at the same time extending its membership to include Faculty representatives. These members sit on Faculty-level course approval committees as well and undertake the detailed examination of course approvals previously carried out by the APC, which has built expertise within Faculties and allowed the APC to focus more upon audit of policy and its implementation.

There are greater challenges in auditing policy implementation. In general terms CSU has historically used a model very similar to that suggested by AUQA in its first review of the University of Sydney:

Policies ought to have built-in systems for ensuring compliance and ongoing monitoring of the same. Review ought to be a separate issue, focusing on periodic assessment of the effectiveness of the systems for ensuring compliance.²

Each main regulation area is examined later in this report, and the 'built-in' compliance systems are discussed there. See also the previous section about academic accountabilities, whereby CSU has codified responsibilities for implementation of policy within contracts of employment for staff.

A critical aspect of CSU operation is 'mainstreaming'. Strategies and policies are very often mainstreamed, meaning that responsibility for their implementation and ongoing monitoring of this implementation rests with the relevant Faculties and Divisions. Senior bodies or staff, such as Academic Senate and its sub-committees, then undertake periodic review of the effectiveness of these mainstreamed operations, as suggested by AUQA above. This is also consistent with Senate's desire to have its policy separated into policy, procedure and delegations, with authority for procedure more widely delegated within an overall standards and outcomes framework that it determines. Senate has no resources to be involved directly in operational procedure or in detailed review of work at this level.

² AUQA (2004). Report of an Audit of The University of Sydney, page 17.

This is a critical process to understand to avoid the narrower focus of some auditing which might ask (for example) “what is Academic Senate doing to assure itself of the quality of teaching at its partner operations?”, with an assumption that the Senate itself be involved with site visits, assessment of teaching standards etc. It is only involved in these detailed quality assurance processes via its sub-committees, normally within the Faculties. Faculties, Divisions and staff then report to the Senate in summary way as part of its assessment of the overall effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms in place. However this also doesn’t prevent the Senate from investigating specific issues, where this is deemed necessary.

There are Academic Senate policies, such as that at section L9 of the Academic Manual on quality assurance of third party arrangements, which have a specific audit focus. Senate has recently audited compliance with this policy (at its September 2008 meeting). However in cases where specific audit activity is mandated, in contrast to where quality mechanisms are built-in, compliance has not historically been high, with very few of the required reports coming to the Senate. Senate is accordingly reviewing its reporting mechanisms as part of its wider work on benchmarking. There may be a review of this policy to allow for Divisional input.

Management Information Systems

The University has a significant number of management information systems (see: <http://www.csu.edu.au/staff/yourcsu/systems.html>). However it has very few ways to interrogate (in a systems way) some of its key academic data, such as subject and course curriculum information. This deficiency has been highlighted during the operation of the CSU Degree Initiative project, which is examining on behalf of Senate and the University CSU curriculum offerings in relation to its strategic planning objectives.

For example there are no authoritative data sources (again in the centralised systems sense) for professional accreditation of CSU courses, practicum subjects, research higher degree subjects, honours subjects, etc. This information is captured to some extent within the course and subject information management system (CASIMS), and within the University Handbook, but because this sort of information often operates on an update cycle that doesn’t coincide with the normal subject and course review cycles, the data is not always reliable.

Dealing with ‘Extraordinary Matters’

The Council has delegated significant authority to the Academic Senate to oversee academic matters. However there will always be times when the Senate might want to discuss other developments within the University for their academic impact, with the Council and/or with management. Similarly the Council may at time want to have a dialogue with the Senate about matters with a strong academic component, such as graduate attributes. And in general there will always be issues where the boundaries between governance and management are not easily defined.

It would be expected that in perhaps 95% of all matters under consideration by either the Council, Senate or management, there would be no need to consult with one or both of the other parties in their specific role. In other words, if governance and management processes are well defined, there should be little need to move outside established procedures and reporting lines. But in 5% of cases there may be a desire to have such a conversation. The University is currently deciding how this might be managed, which would likely include the role of the relevant supporting bodies (Council Secretariat and Office of Academic Governance).

Also under discussion is the possibility that the three main bodies could produce a set of illustrative guidelines to assist staff in progressing proposals. For example the Senate could develop a set of guidelines detailing possible aspects of re-structures that would be of relevance to the Senate, and how this might be progressed through its various committees.

Academic Freedom

The Presiding Officer of Academic Senate is currently drafting a paper on academic freedom to go to the Academic Senate and University Council.

UCPC

Senate’s course accreditation arrangements are described more fully in a separate section below. However in terms of governance it is important to note the role of the University Course Planning Committee (UCPC). The UCPC is a committee of the Vice-Chancellor, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

CSU has chosen to manage the complex interactions between course accreditation in the academic sense and course management (resources, load, attrition etc.) largely via the operation of the UCPC. Membership of the committee includes most of the senior management of the University, from both Faculties and Divisions, and also the Presiding Officer of the Academic Senate, so that a rigorous assessment of proposals can be carried out taking into account the widest possible set of concerns.

This membership overlaps significantly with the Senate itself, and reflects a core CSU decision-making strategy of having key personnel as members of both management and academic committees, and embedding responsibilities that straddle the traditional academic-administration/management divide within single positions as well, such as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

The work of the UCPC is integrated with Senate course accreditation policy and processes via a 'separation of powers', whereby UCPC determines the overall CSU course profile, and resources, modes, locations, partners (see list below) for each course, while the Senate then approves (or not) each course proposal from the standpoint of academic policy. These processes are usually sequential, so that the UCPC gives management or 'planning' approval for a proposal before work commences on Senate documentation, but can also occur concurrently when required.

The UCPC further refined its planning processes in recent years to facilitate a wider consideration of issues, via the expanded membership – previously most Divisional input was via an attestation system. It also greatly simplified some of its documentation and processes. For all formal course proposals from Faculties the UCPC uses what is called a scoping document. This can be in any format, but a memorandum is most common. In essence UCPC is looking for a 'case' to be made for the proposal, taking into account the factors listed below. The scoping document is submitted under the authority of the Dean.

Where it agrees with the proposal but feels its impact will be significant, UCPC will normally then require a full business case to be developed. Any 'commercial activities' documentation that is already required as part of CSU compliance policy can serve as this business case. This methodology was developed to avoid Faculties needing to undertake detailed planning prior to in-principle UCPC agreement. Also many proposals are not of a scale that would warrant detailed documentation.

UCPC has the following approval authorities.

- Introduction of a new course, including the introduction of a new course as part of an articulated set but not where the course is an exit point only. The UCPC will in particular examine: the link to University Strategy and Plans; the likely impact on the discipline and subject profile; quality; sustainability, and critical mass of resources.
- Introduction of a new specialisation.

- Proposals that will have significant resource implications for Divisions, the University as a whole or other Faculties, particularly where these needs can not be met using existing Faculty resources. Where these implications are significant, particularly in relation to infrastructure, the UCPC will refer the matter to the Budget and Planning Committee for decision.
- Increase of the SAL (Subject Availability List) limit for a given Faculty (i.e. overall number of subjects offered by a Faculty). This is approved by the DVC (Academic) and noted by UCPC, or debated where required. Changes to courses or new courses are expected to be SAL-neutral, unless there is a clear demonstration of additional resources coming to the Faculty as a result of the proposal.
- Introduction of a new mode or location of offering to an existing course, or of a different funding source, including transfer of load from other programs.
- Request for new load.
- Phasing out of a course, specialisation, major or offering in a given mode or location.
- Introduction of a new partner in course delivery or a significant change to existing partnership arrangements. This includes both onshore and offshore partnerships.
- Major changes to the overall course profile of a Faculty.
- Suspension of intakes to a course. These can also be approved via email or other correspondence to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), in which case the suspension is noted at UCPC.

The UCPC also monitors many of the key course performance benchmarks on behalf of the University. These include:

- Attrition
- Progress rates
- Progress against the University's plans and strategies where they impact upon courses (including the Course Plan and International Education Strategy)
- Reports from Faculties on compliance with Academic Senate policy on third party arrangements.

As a result of the recent review of internationalisation at CSU, the UCPC has been affirmed as providing oversight to not only course profile matters but also support services for course delivery, including with partners. There has also been a suggestion that the current Academic Senate policy on third party arrangements be amended to allow for direct Divisional reporting on support issues with partners.

No university has actually questioned the value of benchmarking, in any sort of public way. Benchmarking and 'best practice' processes are somewhat tautological - best practices are practices that are the 'best'. By the time analysis of benchmarking data has been carried out to properly contextualise findings (or to understand what is meant by 'best'), any genuine comparison is in the contextualisation, not in the benchmarking. Institutions that do badly in the associated league tables can always contextualise away the result, while those that do well simply assume it's all about them and not about the actual metric used.

Identified Issues

- 1) The Academic Senate at CSU is the smallest in the Australian university sector, and is thus leading the sector against this corporate governance benchmark.
- 2) Members of Academic Senate receive no formal induction, which is increasingly considered a 'best practice' in governance.
- 3) In some AUQA reports, for example the 2008 report on Swinburne, universities are commended for involving offshore/partner staff in governance arrangements, to improve the overall governance and quality of offerings. CSU has not done this to any great extent, although this may be a more applicable approach for full offshore campuses.
- 4) The Academic Senate could consider supplementing its various collegial mechanisms such as committee work with a range of tools and initiatives targeted at individual academic staff. This may also assist staff not traditionally engaged in academic governance to participate in and become engaged with current issues. Nearly all universities focus almost exclusively upon collegiate i.e. committee structures when designing governance frameworks, and further make 'collegiality' synonymous with committee or other group activity. Corporations and even governments have long since introduced techniques for sampling collective rather than collegiate opinion (polls, surveys, focus groups, decision markets). There is significant and extensive evidence that the best decisions actually emerge from collective processes, where decisions are made by individuals from within the context of a group (but not by the group itself).
- 5) The Senate has also not undertaken any sort of significant survey and evaluation of its operation seeking the views of members and of academic staff. Other universities have undertaken quantitative analyses (e.g. through the use of polls and surveys) of staff views in relation to academic governance functions. Some have commissioned external reviews of Senate operations.
- 6) The Office of Academic Governance needs to over time develop a stronger research and benchmarking capability, to allow the Senate to make informed contributions on a range of issues, including wider sector and public debates. The Senate will need to closely consider the number and role of its committees to allow this to occur, with a possible change in emphasis, particularly in senior committees, towards a more strategic engagement with issues internal and external to CSU. Faculty Boards have significantly fewer course-related issues to consider after recent re-structuring of committees, and are a key potential avenue for staff engagement with wider governance issues.
- 7) The Cycle 1 audit noted the 'mechanistic' nature of much Senate decision making, meaning a predominance of procedural decision-making in agendas. To allow for a greater strategic focus Senate might want to consider delegating more of its decisions to individuals, within the wider University delegations framework, freeing up its collegial bodies for more agenda-setting discussion. It could also develop more non-committee collegial mechanisms, as above.
- 8) There is scope for enhancing the communication of Senate decisions via its own members and their role within the Faculties and Divisions. There are inconsistencies in the amount of feedback provided to constituencies of members.

- 9) Senate may over time wish to consider a policy database, perhaps in conjunction with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor (to include the Administration Manual). This has been discussed in recent years, and would for example introduce better search functionality.
- 10) The Academic Senate may need to develop a centralised repository of information on all of its audit activity, including that of its sub-committees. This will likely be the Academic Senate website.
- 11) Academic Senate may wish to strengthen the audit role of some of its other sub-committees, including those within the Faculties such as Faculty Boards. Faculty Boards have much less significant agendas now that course approvals are handled mostly at the Faculty Courses Committee level.
- 12) One concern regarding Senate's committees is the perception by academic staff that Senate committees within a Faculty are in fact Faculty committees, dealing with internal Faculty business. The membership of these committees is also almost exclusively Faculty-based, which encourages an internal focus. It is rare for these committees to discuss wider Senate issues. Senate may wish to refer more matters to these committees for discussion and feedback, and/or to impose more stringent requirements upon them.
- 13) The Senate may need to reinforce within the University that its various sub-committees are the formal avenue for academic staff input to decisions. As such they should operate in conjunction with the various fora, assessing and prioritising proposals that come forward.
- 14) The University should consider whether it has sufficient systems in place for interrogation of some of its academic data, particularly in relation to curriculum. The CASIMS v2 project is working towards addressing some of these needs, and should be strongly supported. There are also significant recommendations in this area arising from the CSU Degree Initiative.
- 15) One area of concern is Academic Senate's use of external benchmarking. AUQA in its second cycle audits to date has been looking for evidence of external benchmarking that includes not just sector-wide standards, like AVCC and AQF guidelines, but also benchmarks specific to University mission, such as technology universities benchmarking against key technology benchmarks and other technology universities. While Academic Senate does require some external input to course reviews, in most other areas it has no such requirements, and has done very little itself of this sort of comparative analysis. The current work on benchmarking (see Part 18) should address this. It is also important to note the close link to the UCPC, which undertakes some of the benchmarking AUQA normally looks for from an Academic Senate, on Senate's behalf.
- 16) Academic Senate may need to discuss with Faculties and Divisions what mechanisms they have in place to ensure that they comply with policy, including whether the audit requirements are too resource-intensive and may require modification, and whether the Faculty or Division has some process in place to ensure required reporting and other audit requirements can be met. The University may also need to consider if Faculties have the required resources to undertake governance and management activities required of them.
- 17) Following from this, it is not clear within the institution who should be responsible for updating policy where operational activity overtakes it. For example there remain sections of academic policy within the Academic Manual that are outdated and incorrect, but have never been corrected because people

working in these areas have either been unaware the policy existed, or have not notified Senate of the changes. The Office of Academic Governance will always draft policy when requested, but cannot always be aware when this is required by changes to practices.

Academic Senate's admission policies are at section D of the Academic Manual.

Unlike most other Senate policies, the Admissions policy is prefaced with a set of overarching principles. Specifically, "The University aims to provide a high quality service to continuing and potential clients through an admissions system which is:

- fair, equitable and transparent;
- client-centred;
- system co-ordinated;
- expeditious; and
- quality controlled."

These are more service-oriented than academic principles, although there is some overlap. For some of these principles there is reference to training of staff, which sits oddly with other Senate policy in terms of the usual divide between policy and management.

Intake quotas are set and reviewed by the UCPC. This includes requests for additional load within existing courses.

Other key aspects of admission to CSU are as follows.

- a) There is a show cause process for admission on the basis of false or misleading information. This process is based on the Student Academic Misconduct Rule.
- b) All CSU students must have a minimum level of internet access, sufficient to work with CSU systems.
- c) Successful applicants will be deemed to have a 'reasonable prospect of success' within their course. The policy provides guidance as to the types of prior study and experience that would indicate the likelihood of this.
- d) The Principal's Report Entry Program (PREP), which guarantees admission to local students on the basis of their high school academic record and recommendation from the school principal. This program was recently extensively reviewed by the Division of Student Administration, to enhance its effectiveness. Outcomes of the review have been very encouraging. See also below.

- e) A Regional Bonus Scheme, whereby all 'regional' students in Australia automatically have their UAI or equivalent automatically increased by 5 points. Non-HSC applicants have their admission rank increased by 5 points.
- f) Detailed requirements for admission to courses at the various AQF levels, and for articulated courses. This includes information about candidature and supervision in research higher degrees.
- g) Rules for students who wish to study outside Australia.
- h) Age requirements.
- i) English language proficiency requirements.
- j) Special admission arrangements for educationally disadvantaged students and elite athletes.
- k) Arrangements for non award students.
- l) Arrangements for upgrade students, who enrol in some CSU course material to be able to meet professional accreditation requirements, without necessarily taking out a CSU award.
- m) Procedures for acceptance of an offer of admission.
- n) Deferred Admission. This section has recently been updated to allow for deferment of DE as well as internal study.
- o) Rules for admission where a student has failed at another institution.
- p) Rules for admission for students who have previously been CSU students.
- q) Course transfer requirements.
- r) Rules for cross enrolment and fee paying students (cross enrolment being enrolment at CSU that counts towards another institution's award).
- s) Procedures for review of decisions under the admission regulations.

Further admission policies are as follows.

Foundation Studies

Details a range of foundation studies programs that qualify applicants for admission to a CSU degree.

Principals' Report Entry Program (PREP)

Provides greater detail for this program, which is also mentioned in the main policy at D1 and above.

Koori Admission Program

An affirmative action policy for Koori students, providing alternative admission pathways. The policy appears to be significantly out of date.

Distance Education Admission Criteria

A policy setting out admission criteria for DE students. The policy appears to be significantly out of date.

Admission of Staff to CSU Courses

Details rules for admission of CSU staff to CSU courses.

Interstate HSC Scores

Describes how CSU compares high school leaving scores across Australian states. The policy may be out of date.

Identified Issues

Admission is reviewed annually by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). There have been significant changes to admission processes in recent years to streamline the University's performance in this area. Online admission is in the process of being introduced.

Little of this review activity impacts upon Academic Senate policy. Where changes to policy are perceived to be needed, they are referred to the Academic Programs Committee and then Academic Senate for discussion and approval. However the fact that this area is reviewed annually helps to ensure that admissions policy reflects actual practice within the University.

CASIMS requires Faculties to fully describe the admission requirements for courses during course accreditation. The guidelines for admission within CASIMS elaborate significantly upon the policy, and thus act in some ways as additional policy in this area. Information provided by Faculties in this CASIMS field is deemed to be the official admission statement for the course.

There are ongoing questions about the English language requirements described in section 5.6 of the regulations. The recent review of internationalisation at CSU has highlighted some of these concerns, and there have also been questions about the ongoing currency of the information listed.

- 1) Faculties, Student Administration and the Office of International Relations should review the English language proficiency requirements in the admission regulations for appropriateness. Senate may also wish to consider whether the delegation granted to the Dean in this area is appropriate.
- 2) Sections D2-D20 of the Academic Manual should be reviewed by relevant sections to ensure policy is current and relevant. There should also be an ongoing requirement for Divisions and Faculties to notify Senate where practice diverges from policy, so that policy may be updated.

- 3) Academic Senate may wish to review the overarching principles for admission, to ensure that they are either reflected in practice, or are perhaps in some cases inappropriate as Senate policy.
- 4) The recent review of internationalisation at CSU highlighted that the documentary requirements for admission that apply to all CSU students are not always monitored for partner staff. The University is addressing this as part of the action flowing from that review.
- 5) The quality of information provided in CASIMS fields by course document authors varies. It is not clear that the admission statement within CASIMS does in fact function as the official statement for admission to the course within all University publications and systems. This may in part be due to the poor quality information that is sometimes provided there – this issue applies to many of the key academic data areas (see sections below as well). The University needs to ensure that authoritative, approved data is used to describe all courses and subjects. There is evidence that sometimes this data is sourced directly from Schools and Faculties, bypassing the formal approval mechanisms.
- 6) The CAL (Course Availability List) has produced a significant improvement to much of the key administrative data surrounding courses. Over time the Academic Senate should move to remove CAL-related data from its accreditation processes, as the CAL is now an authoritative source. The CASIMS version 2 project has this requirement in its scope.

Academic Senate's credit policies are at section E of the Academic Manual.

The main policy at E1 describes the different types of credit, including specified and unspecified credit. Authority is then delegated to Faculties for credit determinations, with a requirement that where a Dean delegates authority for credit determination to an officer of the Faculty (including partners), "the Faculty must demonstrate that the delegated officer has the appropriate expertise to exercise the authority, and that the authority is exercised in accordance with the provisions of these regulations."

The University does not allow for partial credit within a subject. It does however allow staff to waive some subject requirements where a student can clearly demonstrate proficiency. Also students whose study was undertaken more than 10 years ago may be required to demonstrate the currency of their knowledge before receiving credit in a CSU course.

For undergraduate courses Academic Senate recently changed the rule for maximum allowable credit so that a student must complete the equivalent of one year of full-time study at CSU in order to be eligible for a CSU award. This absolute rather than proportional calculation – for postgraduate degrees 50% of a course may be granted as credit, and previously undergraduate credit limits were also calculated using proportions – does allow a student a significant amount of credit in longer degrees, and no credit in the case of University Certificates. It isn't certain that this is a logical or fair outcome.

The policy sets out those situations where unlimited credit applies, such as when completed CSU study has never been credited towards an award. It also prohibits credit for research work, such as for theses and dissertations.

There are procedural sections on application for the different types of credit, and delegations to Faculties and Student Administration for determining applications. Students are advised of credit determinations in writing.

The policy defines and elaborates upon transfer credit, block credit, grade credit, ungraded credit and credit for concurrent enrolment.

Finally the policy describes subject substitution, where a student can substitute a subject for a compulsory subject in which they have demonstrated competence, and processes for review of credit determinations.

Credit Packages and Credit Precedents

CSU has operated credit packages for a considerable time. These are formalised block credit arrangements, whereby a sequence of subjects or a certain number of credit points, based upon a student's prior study or experience, are approved by the Faculty Board to be used (normally upon admission) for particular cohorts of students. Sector language would call them 'structured credit arrangements', as opposed to unstructured credit arrangements.

Credit packages receive no mention in Academic Senate policy. This is not a major issue, as they are more an instrument constructed using rules found within the policy, although their approval arrangements should perhaps be officially codified. There have been issues surrounding currency of credit packages for many years, with many of those published in the Academic Manual found to be out of date and/or incorrect.

Unstructured credit determinations, such as credit negotiated on an individual student basis by a subject or course coordinator, have until recently had no formal systems-based method of capturing decisions and therefore precedents. In 2007 the University developed a credit precedents database for this purpose, which is now in use although still being refined. This is considered to be a best practice across the sector.

The Academic Programs Committee recently commissioned an institutional self-assessment of all credit practices on behalf of Senate, following publication by DEST of a report they had commissioned by PhillipsKPA on credit transfer practices across the sector. This report was focused upon credit transfer between the VTE and university sectors, but resulted in far more sweeping recommendations that encompass all aspects of credit. One recommendation was that universities undertake a self-assessment against a revised set of guidelines for credit transfer produced by PhillipsKPA, which subsumed all of the existing guidelines from the AVCC, AQF and DEST. This is what APC commissioned.

The outcomes of the self-assessment were considered by APC and enacted. The report may be found on the Academic Senate website. A further action flowing from the PhillipsKPA report was the setting up of a project, by MCEETYA, to examine credit terminology across the sector, and to (where possible) standardise these definitions. CSU has submitted a response to this project, also available on the Academic Senate website.

The only sub-policy in section E is on AVCC credit transfer principles. These are addressed above in relation to the PhillipsKPA report for MCEETYA.

Identified Issues

APC looked at the question of CSU having no distinct policy on recognition of prior learning (RPL). The APC felt that RPL had traditionally been handled as proficiency credit at CSU, but has referred the matter to the Academic Senate for advice. The AQF have published specific guidelines for RPL, distinguishing it from credit.

- 1) The Academic Senate may wish to discuss whether the one-year rule for maximum credit in undergraduate courses is logical and fair, given that it retains its proportional rule (50%) for PG courses. Currently a student receives more credit in an UG course the longer the course is, and in some shorter courses no credit is available at all, which seems anomalous. It should also ensure that the clauses on Distinction and Extension courses are still current, and consider describing credit packages and their approval arrangements within policy.
- 2) The credit precedents database should be strongly supported by the University, as it is an essential tool in managing quality credit decisions and recording precedents. It is also considered almost mandatory that universities have such a system by AUQA audits at this time, and this was similarly emphasised in the PhillipsKPA report to MCEETYA.
- 3) Credit rules, particularly in relation to credit limits, are not always well understood within the University or by administrative staff implementing them. The credit precedents database should allow for much greater consistency of credit decisions, while credit packages have the in-built safety of having Faculty Board consideration and approval.
- 4) It is important that key administrative staff, for example within the Division of Student Administration, are trained in Senate policy, understand its role within the wider University and are also kept abreast of updates to policy. There does need to be integration mechanisms. One such mechanism is the recent addition of the Executive Director of Student Administration to the APC, Senate's main regulations committee.
- 5) The Senate may want to consider whether to have specific policy on recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- 6) Faculties need to ensure that both credit packages and credit precedent information are always current.
- 7) APC/Senate may wish to evaluate whether it still necessary to have specific policy on the AVCC credit transfer guidelines, as there are other important guidelines within the sector that have no policy, and all sector guidelines are currently in flux because of the recent MCEETYA-commissioned report from PhillipsKPA.
- 8) CSU has one of its strategic priorities to enhance linkages with the vocational and technical education (VTE) sector. This was a major focus of the self-assessment against the PhillipsKPA report. Additionally the University is employing a dedicated contract staff member within the Division of Marketing to strengthen these relationships.
- 9) The clauses in the policy on NSW Distinction Courses and ACT Extension Units may be out of date.

Academic Senate's enrolment policies are at section F of the Academic Manual.

The main policy at section F1 is one of Senate's most heavily procedure-focused regulations. There are general rules about eligibility and responsibility for enrolment.

Further matters described in the enrolment regulations are as follows.

- a) Various rules surrounding fees.
- b) Rules for commonwealth-supported places.
- c) A variety of rules surrounding selection of subjects. For example a course coordinator may require that students gain their approval of enrolment patterns before enrolment is finalised, and/or to restrict the number of subjects a student may take in a given session.
- d) Pre-requisites. The University has discussed the heavy use of pre-requisites, and whether this is hampering access to its courses. Senate will need to be involved in this discussion, should it progress further.
- e) Student numbers, personal data and HECS-HELP liability. Personal data relates to a students' contact and other details, and the regulations also clarify that incorrect personal data is not a basis for appeal against the University's decisions (for example a student not receiving an exclusion notice because they've changed address, but haven't notified the University).
- f) Re-enrolment, including for thesis/dissertation students.
- g) Adding subjects to an existing enrolment.
- h) Withdrawal from subjects.
- i) Leave of absence and re-enrolment after leave of absence.
- j) Failure to re-enrol, and show cause, exclusion and appeals mechanisms for students who fail to re-enrol.

- k) Last date for enrolment.
- l) Enrolment in more than one course.
- m) Mixed mode enrolment, where a student enrolls in more than one mode (e.g. internal, DE) in a given session. This is becoming increasingly common as students balance work and study.
- n) Transfer between study modes and study loads.
- o) Tutorial study mode.
- p) Enrolment after exclusion.
- q) Refusal of enrolment (e.g. a student in debt to the University, or a student wishing to study from overseas without meeting certain conditions).
- r) Course regulations i.e. those conditions pertaining to each course specified in the University Handbook.
- s) A rule stating that no tutorial may be scheduled before the first lecture of a session, and the rule stipulating that 3-5 pm each Wednesday during session time should be free from all classes, on all campuses.

Senate has one sub-policy listed within section F, on enrolment of academic staff in CSU courses and subjects. This policy has been transferred to the Administration Manual, under the Personnel category.

Identified Issues

- 1) The Senate may wish to consider what information a student 'signs' at enrolment, to strengthen its appeals mechanisms in the legal sense. It is the admission and enrolment forms that largely determine what form of contract exists between the student and the University.
- 2) It might be necessary to examine international study arrangements to ensure enrolment regulations surrounding refusal of enrolment are not inconsistent with current practice.
- 3) It seems highly unlikely that the 'Wednesday afternoon rule' is being applied across all campuses of the University.

- 4) Online enrolment will continue to be a quality issue for Senate, although DegreeWorks can be used to help to plan and track enrolment.

Academic Senate's assessment policies are at section G of the Academic Manual. Also in section G are policies on academic misconduct and examinations. Academic misconduct is described in Part 8 of this document.

Unlike the other main academic regulation areas, assessment has both policy and a set of regulations. The policy derives from the work of a major Senate working party in 2000, and contains the higher principles and standards which are then enacted via the regulations.

Policy

Senate intends that assessment at CSU be transparent, equitable and accountable. Senate makes a distinction between *summative* and *formative* assessment, which co-exist in CSU practice. There are also a set of principles upon which assessment at CSU is based. These include strong statements about resourcing and training, with recognition that resources will always be finite. Senate has also linked its policy to various stakeholders, including staff, students, employers and the State, with a subsequent broad distinction between assessment for pedagogical and credentialing purposes.

Senate acknowledges that:

- a) assessment is at root a matter of professional judgment and discretion
- b) that subsequently assessment practices will vary between Schools and Faculties, within the boundaries of Senate policy
- c) assessment should take into account wherever possible students' backgrounds and cultures, without sacrificing standards.

Outcomes of assessment are monitored by the School and Faculty Assessment Committees. This includes approval of all grades – all CSU grades are approved by Faculty Assessment Committees, not by individual members of staff. Senate has also emphasised that monitoring of assessment is not in itself sufficient to ensure quality, but must be accompanied by a strong supporting culture and resources. The collegiate quality assurance of assessment and grading is fundamental at CSU.

Students have a range of responsibilities under the assessment regulations, and most generally are responsible for their learning and for reaching appropriate standards in their subjects.

The main characteristics of CSU assessment are as follows.

Communication

The main vehicle for communication of assessment requirements to students is the subject outline (note that there is now specific, separate policy for outlines under course accreditation policy, discussed in a later section.) Senate also approves a subject profile for each subject as part of its course accreditation procedures.

The purpose of the profile is to:

- record the basic content details, the intellectual map of the subject
- contextualise the subject relative to other subjects in a course through link fields e.g. prerequisites
- contextualise the subject in relation to courses it serves as either core, minor, specialisation, or restricted elective through the 'courses served' field
- enable the approval of the subject by the appropriate bodies
- facilitate inclusion in the systems of the University [e.g. Master Files, SAL, Handbook]
- exist as the officially approved description of the subject until officially altered by the teaching School, and
- serve as the historical record of the officially approved description of the subject at a particular date once superseded.

The purpose of the subject outline is to:

- activate the subject in preparation for learning and teaching, including the provision of details about teaching strategies, texts, readings, resources and assessment items
- link the subject to relevant regulations, memoranda of agreement [e.g. Student & University Charter] and other relevant policies
- specify conditions pertinent to the subject that must be met by students
- serve as an agreed learning and teaching contract between the University and a specified enrolment of students, and
- provide the historical record of the particular mode, campus, year and session offering of the subject.

The University has created systems to support, publish and quality assure the production of both subject profiles and subject outlines. Subject outlines are shortly to be replaced with “mandatory subject information”, which will be an online system linked to the University’s main teaching and learning system, Interact.

Communication in assessment also extends to adequate feedback on assessment tasks, to students, and access to examination papers, including scripts.

Standards

Standards are set via a combination of norm and criterion referencing. Norm referencing assists in determining standards by reference to the expected performance of a cohort of students in the subject. i.e. standards are informed by the Senate requirement that the number of students at each grade level above pass will decrease as the grade level increases, and that there should normally be fewer students failing than passing a subject.

Senate also has determined that there will be no set failure rate in a subject, and that such rates should not vary significantly between enrolments in any version of the subject. Scaling is not encouraged, and is only to be undertaken where assessment tasks were deemed to be inappropriate, in which case there is a clear expectation that they will be modified for the next offering.

Staff and Student Work Loads

Senate has recently commissioned a working party, in conjunction with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), to examine student workloads within subjects.

Senate recognises that over-assessment is not pedagogically useful, and also that assessment tasks should be spread as evenly through a teaching session as possible. Assessment requirements should take into account attendance and preparation time, and expectations should be consonant with the proportion of a session load constituted by each subject. Marks for each assessment task should reflect the time allocation to each.

Equity

Equity in assessment encompasses both the variety of different equity groups, as well as the level of student experience e.g. assessment tasks for a subject with a predominantly first-year cohort should be designed according to the relative lack of experience of these students. Summative assessment should not include material that isn't in pre-requisite requirements or the subject itself. Non-threatening examination locations are also available to first-year students from identifiable minority groups (see section on examinations below).

Quality Assurance

Faculty assessment policies must be consistent with the main Senate policy. School and Faculty assessment committees must ensure that Senate assessment policy is complied with, and that marking is consistent where there are multiple markers in a given subject. They should critically analyse any assessment distributions that breach Senate policy. In practice this has led to the development of various moderation processes, particularly for partner/offshore cohorts.

Other matters

- Variations of grades during the grade approval process are (should be) communicated to subject coordinators.

- Assignments with a direct bearing on an examination should be returned to students no later than one week before the examination.
- Grades can be reviewed (see the section on the assessment regulations, below).

Identified Issues

- 1) Given concerns raised by the Internationalisation AUQA taskforce about the quality of subject outlines, particularly in relation to assessment information, Senate may need to audit or have audited the quality of subject outlines. However the development of the MSI system may address this issue.
- 2) The School and Faculty Assessment Committees have the main responsibility for monitoring assessment standards. However in the absence of grade approval technologies, the work of these committees is often administrative. The University is working on an electronic gradebook, which will assist these committees in strengthening their quality assurance role.
- 3) While grade approval processes are largely collegial at CSU, removing much of the risk of this activity, Deans may still approve grades between meetings of the Faculty Assessment Committees. Senate approved this because of the practicalities of grade processing, but it might need to monitor the extent to which this exemption is used.
- 4) The assessment policy (clause 2.5) requires subject coordinators to 'seek' a report from all markers in a subject, to give feedback on the nature of the task, the application of the marking criteria and student's learning. It is not known if this occurs regularly.
- 5) CSU's assessment policies are very thorough, but there are questions as to what extent they are understood and enacted in practice. While systems such as CASIMS and MSI can provide some degree of automated or built-in quality assurance, they do not in themselves create a culture of quality assessment. The learning and teaching committees in Schools, Faculties and at the senior Senate sub-committee level oversee these issues.
- 6) Following on from 4), Senate has no central learning and teaching policy, as it does for assessment, enrolment, graduation etc. However many of its other policies have learning and teaching elements, and the University has devoted extensive resources to learning and teaching itself, for example via CELT and its new institutes. There are therefore significant resources devoted to learning and teaching at CSU. Senate may need to determine if this is sufficient quality assurance, or whether the various learning and teaching mechanisms across the University should be codified in a broader, general policy setting out principles, standards etc.
- 7) The University has no published, university-wide moderation standard.

Regulations

There is much overlap between Senate's assessment policy and regulations, as the regulations in effect enact the policy.

Grades

The grading scale for CSU subjects is a fairly standard fail-high distinction range. These grade levels correspond with percentage scaled aggregate marks (as opposed to a summation of raw marks for assessable items within the subject). There is also a satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade choice, for practical, industrial experience and thesis/dissertation subjects, or more generally where performance in a subject is not assessed using means that would allow for an aggregate scaled mark. Honours grades are awarded both for the dissertation, and for the honours course as a whole (separately).

There are a range of administrative grades which do not indicate performance in a subject but rather a student's enrolment status, whether they need to sit a supplementary exam, etc. Many relate to incomplete or delayed assessment, and Senate allows for students to apply for consideration of misadventure/extenuating circumstances in assessment. Senate requires all incomplete grades to be finalised by the first Faculty Assessment Committee meeting of the following session.

Additional Assessment

For marginal failure in a subject, Schools may offer additional assessment to allow the student an opportunity to pass (a student can not achieve anything more than a passing grade as a result of additional assessment). Additional assessment can include an additional examination, although these may be phased out with the introduction of the University's Unified Session Model in 2010.

A Head of School may determine that a student may not complete a subject and/or undertake the final examination, if their performance to that point means that they can not pass the subject irrespective of their performance after that time. This extends to practicum subjects, where the student may have been found professionally unsuitable to continue.

All grade notification is carried out under the authority of the Executive Director, Student Administration. Grades may also be withheld where the student is in debt to the University.

Review of Grades and Marks

Both final grades and marks for individual assessment tasks may be reviewed at the request of the student. The student is expected to consult with their subject coordinator in the first instance before evoking formal review mechanisms. Reviews of final grade are decided by the Faculty Assessment Committee, on recommendation from the School Assessment Committee. Where there is no scheduled meeting, the Dean may determine review outcomes, to be ratified by the next Faculty Assessment Committee. Reviews of marks for individual assessment items are decided by the Head of School.

Progression

Progression at CSU is calculated according to a range of criteria, designed to both assist students in meeting progression requirements and protect the academic integrity of CSU courses. 'At risk' indicators are built into the system, as well as advice and support to students experiencing difficulties. More specific details of progress rules are provided in a later section.

Residential Schools

The University offers both compulsory and optional residential schools, normally for distance education (DE) subjects. Students may apply for exemption from a residential school on the grounds of misadventure, having passed the residential component of the subject at a previous failed attempt at the subject, or having existing proficiency in the learning to be delivered at the residential school.

Where a student fails to attend residential schools they must show cause as to why they should not be failed in the subject. For course-based residential schools the course coordinator decides the outcome of the show cause, and the Head of the teaching School does so for subject-based schools.

Assignments

Assignments are defined as any piece of assessable work listed in a subject outline, which must be completed to pass the subject. Senate has determined that all assignments should be returned in a 'timely fashion' with adequate feedback and a grade or mark. (See above for rules on assignments that are directly relevant to an examination.)

Student assignments (including marks and grades) are regarded as private information, and student consent is required to release them for other purposes. Subject coordinators are authorised to release de-identified data on mark or grade distributions to students on request. Where markers are given detailed assessment criteria, these must also be made available to students prior to them submitting the assignment.

Senate has strict rules for the submission and return of assignments, including late returns, with DE assignments managed by the Learning Material Centre (now Division of Learning and Teaching Services). Senate also requires a variety of reports from the Learning Materials Centre to itself and to Heads of School on submission and return of assignments.

Examinations

Examinations are administered by the Examinations office, within the Division of Student Administration. Senate policy is highly procedural in this area. There are: provisions for exam clashes and objections (such as too many examinations on the same day); description of rules surrounding the examination timetable; invigilation arrangements; examination locations, and changes to locations and overall procedures for the conduct of an examination.

Senate allows for special consideration in the conduct of examinations, including provisions for breastfeeding, disability, minority status and misadventure. The Examinations Office, Head of School, School Assessment Committee and subject coordinator collectively determine the outcome of such cases. Special examinations are sometimes required, for example where a student has a disability that prevents them from completing the standard examination paper.

For cancelled or terminated examinations (for example due to fire or flood), the Head of School has discretion to decide a variety of alternatives, such as supplementary examination, a grade based on work already completed in the subject etc.

Identified Issues

- 1) In recent times the satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading scale has been increasingly used, as more subjects are created that do not result in an aggregate, scaled mark. This has also highlighted that the University has no clear definition of a practicum subject or industrial experience subject.
- 2) The Senate has previously discussed the (then) very large number of grades that remained unfinalised for a significant time (such as GP and TA grades), and introduced rules in this area. It may be timely to have Faculty Assessment Committees report on whether these rules are being complied with.
- 3) Academic Senate has no policy on student transcripts. There are increasingly complex questions surrounding what is displayed on a student transcript, not all of which are administrative matters only. The introduction of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS) will likely force the University to examine the transcript more fully.
- 4) Reports, such as those on submission of assignments, are not always received by Senate. The Office of Academic Governance is developing a summary register of all reporting requirements in Senate policy, and Senate will be given an opportunity to review current reporting requirements and to suggest changes.

- 5) The administration of examinations is currently under review. Timetabling and length of examinations will also be discussed in relation to the Unified Session Model (USM). There is some evidence that CSU has an anomalous reliance upon 3-hour examinations, compared to the rest of the sector.

Academic Senate's student academic misconduct policies are at section G of the Academic Manual. Academic misconduct by staff is not normally considered a Senate matter. General misconduct by students is dealt with under the University's General Misconduct Policy, for students.

Senate classifies academic misconduct in three broad ways.

- 1) **Plagiarism** – defined as a student giving an impression that the ideas, words or work of another person are theirs.
- 2) **Cheating** – defined as a student not abiding by the conditions set for a learning experience, assessment item or examination.
- 3) **Collusion** – defined as a student working without permission with one or more other students to produce work that is then submitted as if it had been produced by the student alone.

Where academic misconduct is not deemed to be sufficiently serious to warrant formal investigation, Senate policy does not require that the formal policy and procedures be utilised. For example the Senate policy makes a clear distinction between plagiarism and poor or inadequate referencing, which may be dealt with in an educative way, with the student.

The formal academic misconduct process begins with a preliminary investigation, under the authority of the relevant Head of School (unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case the Dean appoints a different Faculty member to oversee the investigation). The investigation has no real restrictions placed upon it, within the normal boundaries of due process, and can consult widely. If the outcome of the investigation is that the student has no case to answer, then the matter is not pursued further, although the person who originally notified the University of the possible misconduct then has the opportunity to have this 'no case' decision reviewed by the Dean.

Where there is a case to answer, and a student has admitted the misconduct, the case can proceed directly to penalty via the Dean. Where the student has not admitted the misconduct, an Academic Misconduct Panel is convened within the Faculty, to determine the matter and recommend a course of action to the Dean. If the student neither admits nor denies the allegation, the Panel is convened, or a penalty is recommended immediately where the evidence is compelling.

The Dean has some discretion to conduct their own enquiries in academic misconduct matters after receiving a report from the preliminary stages, and can determine penalties or recommend penalties to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), for more serious offences. They can also make recommendations on broad questions of academic policy and practice arising out of cases. Penalties include cautions, reprimands, failure in assessment tasks, failure in a subject, suspension from the University, exclusion from the University, and a fine. Both the Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) are required to consider any previous offences of the student in making their determination on penalty, via a central register of all cases maintained by the Office of Academic Governance.

Appeals

Appeals against findings of academic misconduct are made to the Academic Senate's Academic Appeals Committee. Appeals are only allowed on procedural and/or conflict of interest grounds. Appeals are conducted as relatively informal hearings, with witnesses and support people permitted (provided they are not legal professionals).

Reporting

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) reports annually to the Academic Senate in summary form on all cases of student academic misconduct considered in the previous year.

The Office of Academic Governance has also produced an academic misconduct action kit, which translates the policy into procedural guidelines targeted at each stage of the process. There are template letters to assist staff and to provide a more consistent response to cases from the University. This kit is found at: http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/misc/

University Mechanisms

The Senate policy on student academic policy constitutes only one component of the University's response in this area. Senate has affirmed that its main emphasis in dealing with academic misconduct is educative and preventative, rather than punitive. It has a Standing Committee on Plagiarism Management, a sub-committee of its Learning and Teaching Committee, which considers misconduct matters. The University's "Avoiding Plagiarism" program is extensive and educative, and is accompanied by significant and repeated communication to students about the issue, training packages and programs etc.

Referencing

Academic Senate has determined that the referencing style required in subjects is to be determined on a discipline basis, at the School or Faculty level. This information is to be made available to students in subject outlines and in teaching materials. The Division of Student Services provides detailed information about each of the styles, to students.

Identified Issues

- 1) Anecdotal and more formal evidence, such as recent investigation by the Faculties of Education and Business, highlights that staff are sometimes uncertain about when to evoke the formal misconduct policy and procedures.
- 2) Following from 1), staff are often concerned about questions of intent i.e. whether a student 'intended' to commit misconduct. This is not relevant to most academic misconduct cases.
- 3) There is very little understanding amongst staff of the legal nature of academic misconduct matters. For example the policy was written to be in accordance with administrative law, which is the domain in which cases are heard if they are pursued outside the University, and which provides the basic framework for many University decisions. For this reason the procedures often appear legalistic and convoluted to staff, which then encourages non-compliance. Some cases that proceed to external bodies such as the Ombudsman or Supreme Court are then prejudiced by this non-compliance, and more generally there is a risk students are not being afforded natural justice.
- 4) Following on from 3), the Academic Senate may over time wish to consider the way it conducts investigations and appeals for academic misconduct, to be more mindful of the legal aspects of these processes. This may in fact result in simpler rather than more complicated policy. See also 6) below.
- 5) School offices in particular are stretched and not always well-equipped to administer misconduct cases. There may be a need to have greater resources and/or training dedicated to the processing of misconduct cases.
- 6) Senate appeals mechanisms for academic misconduct (and for exclusions) have two stages, one open-ended at the Faculty level and a procedural appeal at the Senate level. The procedural level of appeal is probably not tenable under administrative law, and should be reviewed. Further it is possible that having two levels of appeal adds nothing necessary to the appeals process, produces unnecessary amounts of administration and needlessly extends the timelines for finalising these cases.
- 7) The Student Academic Misconduct Action Kit is in need of simplification and re-design. The Office of Academic Governance has commenced this work.

Academic Senate's policies on academic progress are at section I of the Academic Manual.

The main emphasis of progress regulations at CSU is to assist students in monitoring and controlling their own progress. To that end Academic Senate has approved five main indicators of progress, against which student performance is measured and action then taken, where necessary. These overlap in some instances.

- 1) Whether a student can complete the course in which they are enrolled within the allocated maximum time. This maximum time is defined as twice the normal time required to complete the course. Where a course is also offered part-time, the maximum time for all students (full-time and part-time) in the course is twice the part-time duration. This indicator is based mostly on currency of knowledge considerations.
- 2) Whether a student has passed at least one subject by the end of the second year of their enrolment in a course.
- 3) Students must pass all honours subjects at the first attempt.
- 4) Professional experience (e.g. practicum) components of a course must be passed at the first attempt. Deans may also fail a student at any time during a practicum or field work placement if they deem that a person or the good reputation of the University is at risk.
- 5) Faculties can nominate key subjects in a course which a student must pass with a maximum of two attempts. These are subjects felt to be integral to a student's suitability in a course. They are normally in the first two years of a course, are not practicum subjects, and a course would generally have no more than six such subjects.

Students are also required to re-enrol in each session of their course. Failure to do this can result in them being withdrawn from their course.

Students may be either excluded from the course, or have their enrolment terminated, as a result of not meeting the progress criteria. Students have a right of appeal (see below). If they are excluded from the same course a second time, the period of exclusion is increased and is from all courses and programs at the University.

Appeals

Appeals against exclusion and termination of enrolment under the academic progress policy are, as for academic misconduct appeals (see section 8), in two stages. The first level of appeal is to a Faculty Exclusion Appeals Committee (FEAC), which considers the student's appeal on fairly comprehensive grounds. If unsuccessful the student may then appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee, on procedural and/or conflict of interest grounds.

Early Intervention

In 2007 Academic Senate approved the use of an early intervention indicator, for use with all onshore international and domestic students. If students fail more than 50% of their subjects in a given (compulsory i.e. not summer) session, they are sent a notice via their ebox of the possible need to seek assistance. For international students this includes information about their visa requirements. This indicator was designed originally to administer requirements under the ESOS Act, for onshore international students.

Identified Issues

- 1) As for academic misconduct, the two stages of appeal may add a level of redundancy to procedures. It also presents a challenge to compressed inter-session breaks under the proposed Unified Session Model (USM). The grounds for appeal for the FEAC may also be too restrictive (and are definitely so for the Academic Appeals Committee, in this area).
- 2) Because exclusion and termination of enrolment affect the rights and interests of students, these decisions (as for academic misconduct) are able to be appealed in external tribunals, including courts. All appeals should therefore be assessed with this additional factor in mind.
- 3) Key subjects are administratively not well supported. There are lapses in Faculties nominating key subjects for courses and then updating them as courses are modified.

Academic Senate's policies on graduation are at section J of the Academic Manual.

The graduation regulations are largely administrative. The core requirement for graduation is that a student meets the requirements for their course as listed in the University Handbook, in their year of enrolment.

Governance

University Council awards the degree, normally at a graduation ceremony but also in absentia, or as an aegrotat or posthumous award. Academic Senate has delegated responsibility from Council to determine eligible graduands. Previously it did so via the Academic Awards Committee, but this introduced a level of redundancy into processing that significantly slowed down award approvals and restricted planning for graduation ceremonies. It has now delegated this responsibility to Deans, who communicate their determinations directly to relevant Divisions. For research degrees the Board of Graduate Studies (BOGS) recommends graduands to Council.

Multiple Awards

Where a student undertakes a "Type 1" double degree, which results in them graduating with two awards, they may not take out one of the awards before completion of the entire program, unless they withdraw from or are excluded from the program. For articulated sets of courses, students may choose to graduate with earlier awards in the set before completion of the full set. This also applies for students undertaking an add-on honours award i.e. they may graduate with their Bachelor pass degree before finishing their honours study.

Phase Outs

Students in a course that is being phased out normally have the opportunity to transfer to another related course with full credit, and graduate with that other award.

Ceremonies

Graduands are expected to graduate at their campus of enrolment, where they wish to attend a graduation ceremony. This includes offshore students where there is no offshore ceremony. Students can apply to the Executive Director of Student Administration if they wish to graduate at another location.

Students may also graduate *in absentia* at a meeting of the University Council. If they do so they may not attend a ceremony, and they do not attend the Council meeting where the degree is conferred. The one exception is doctoral students, who may have their award conferred at a meeting of Council and attend a separate graduation ceremony.

Students may not defer graduation.

Honours, Graduation with Distinction, GPA

The graduation regulations contain the formula for calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA). The GPA is no longer used to monitor academic progress, but is part of the assessment of awards such as graduation With Distinction and the University Medal.

CSU has the following classes of Bachelor honours award:

Class 1

Class 2, Division 1

Class 2, Division 2

Class 3

Students may also undertake honours at the Master level.

Graduation With Distinction is available where a student has achieved a distinction average (measured using the GPA) in an eligible course of more than 64 points duration, and where the course is not an honours or doctoral program. Where a student does not complete 64 points (i.e. one year) at CSU and the credit they bring from other study is at the required Distinction average, they are also eligible. An 'undistinguished session' does not invalidate a student's claims to graduation With Distinction, provided GPA requirements are met.

Where a student has completed an articulated set of courses, they may only graduate With Distinction where they have achieved a Distinction average in the entire sequence of courses. This is because an articulation arrangement is nested, with lower-level awards comprising the entire first components of the higher-level awards in the set.

Where a student graduates With Distinction and later graduates from the honours year in that course, With Distinction is no longer cited. With Distinction also does not form part of the nomenclature of the award.

University Medals

A university medal is conferred by University Council, and is the highest award available to an undergraduate student at CSU. Eligible students are those with honours class 1, or with graduation With Distinction from a course or specialisation, combined with a GPA of 6.75 and above. A student may not be awarded a university medal in both a bachelor course and its related honours course. Nominees from Faculties must also be in the year of graduation.

The University Medals Committee meets annually to consider Faculty nominations, and awards normally no more than five university medals per year. Where it wishes to award more than five medals it needs to clarify its reasons with Academic Senate. Only one medal is available per course, although students may be jointly awarded a medal in a particular course – this joint awarding is also noted on the medal. Faculties make their nominations based on criteria specified in the graduation regulations.

Testamurs

The graduation regulations set out rules surrounding the CSU testamur, including how the student's name will be shown, how non-English and Aboriginal names will be shown, and how the testamur will be constructed for courses that were delivered primarily in languages other than English. Appellations and honours (civic, military etc.) are not shown on the testamur. Students may also apply for replacement testamurs, if required.

Similar Awards

Clause 10 of the graduation regulations prohibits students from citing an award at a lower (AQF) level if they complete an award in a similar area at a higher level. The one exception is where a student undertakes an honours degree after completion of a three-year Bachelor course. Conversely students will not be granted an award at a lower level in an area of study in which they already have a higher level award.

Academic Dress

Finally the graduation regulations detail academic dress requirements for graduation.

Identified Issues

- 1) In conjunction with Student Administration, the course coordinator attests that a student has completed all of the requirements for their course, to allow them to graduate. There is no systemic way of assuring that the course as published in the University Handbook (i.e. what has been formally approved via CASIMS) is used to perform this check. With the introduction of “Degree Works” this may change.
- 2) The status of graduation ceremonies as “meetings of the University Council” has never been fully clarified. As Council awards CSU degrees, and the degree is said to be conferred at graduation, technically graduation ceremonies operate as meetings of the University Council. This is in some ways a technical/legal point, but it has implications on the administration of ceremonies, graduation delegations and timing of award conferral (an increasingly contested issue in a competitive job market, with students often wanting conferral much earlier than a scheduled ceremony or Council meeting).
- 3) For graduation With Distinction, the Dean may determine what is ‘equivalent’ to a distinction average in study completed elsewhere and used for credit at CSU. This is a very open-ended discretionary power, designed to streamline the administration of such cases but also perhaps too broad in potential scope.
- 4) It’s not certain that the rules on similar awards (clause 10 of the policy) are consistently adhered to. Some aspects of this clause would also be difficult to enforce e.g. preventing students from citing awards in a certain way once they have left the University.
- 5) There is a very significant industry in testamur forgery, worldwide. Universities have adopted a variety of security measures, such as polymer-based testamur stock, but these are also now forged. There is a suggestion that universities should instead focus on in-house verification mechanisms that can be readily accessed by employers and other external parties (e.g. databases of student details, available online). CSU is not advanced in the art of testamur/award security.
- 6) It is likely that a large amount of the procedural information in the graduation regulations need have little Senate input, and could therefore be removed. It is also unusual that Senate has the official policy on graduation, when in reality graduation is a function of the University Council. This creates confusion.
- 7) When approving policy on aegrotat awards, Senate did not consider the eventuality of a student recovering from a ‘permanent’ illness.

Academic Senate's policies on higher degree programs are at sections H and K of the Academic Manual. The administration of Academic Senate policy on research rests very heavily with the Centre for Research and Graduate training (CRGT), and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

The regulations for Higher Degree – Research and Thesis, Master by Coursework and Dissertations and the Professional Doctorates, and the Rule for the Presentation of Theses and Other Examinable Print Works were integrated into Progress, Supervision and Assessment Regulations: Theses and Other Examinable Research Works (H1 of the Academic Manual) and other academic regulations as appropriate (eg Admission, Credit, Enrolment).

Research Higher Degree programs

These are programs containing a research component which is 66% or more of the whole program.

- Doctor of Philosophy
- Research Professional Doctorate
- Master by Research

Coursework programs with research component

These are programs containing a research component which is less than 66% of the whole program.

- Coursework Professional Doctorate
- Master by Coursework and Dissertation
- Bachelor (Honours)

The categories of examinable work are:

- Thesis (print and non-print)
- Dissertation (print and non-print)
- Portfolio
- Project.

Senate has a policy on research maintenance funds. It describes rules and procedures for the allocation of funding for research consumables. Funds cannot be used for personal or computer expenses. The policy also deals with support funds for scholarship holders.

Senate has determined admission criteria for all higher degree (research) students, which include the need for research to be in one of the University's identified fields of study, and that there be sufficient qualified staff to supervise the work and sufficient resources to carry it out. BOGS also considers the qualifications of examiners. Resource issues are deemed to be Faculty issues, rather than CRGT issues.

Date of completion of higher degree work is the date BOGS endorses the Faculty's recommendation that the award be conferred. Date of conferral is the graduation date, or date of the Council meeting for students graduating *in absentia*. Both completion and conferral dates are recorded on the student's transcript.

Examination of PhDs

Senate has published a set of guidelines and procedures for examiners of PhD theses. The purpose of a PhD at CSU is to produce graduates capable of conducting independent research at a high level of originality and quality. The guidelines describe what this means in practical terms i.e. in terms of outcomes.

Higher Doctorates

Senate's policy on Higher Doctorates describes requirements for the awards of Doctor of letters (DLitt) and Doctor of Science (DSc).

Integrated Regulations

Because integration of the research higher degree regulations has created significant concern within the University, a summary of the process leading to the current situation is provided below.

Prior to 2002, a separate set of regulations existed for each of the types of program that contain a research component (bachelor honours, master by coursework or coursework and dissertation, professional doctorate, higher degree by research and thesis). Regulations for all other types of programs were grouped according to particular aspects of study (admission, credit, graduation, etc.). In the normal process of amending or revising regulations, staff became aware of a variety of inconsistencies between the various research program regulations and/or between those regulations and the "general" regulations. Because the separate sets of research program regulations had developed at different points in the institution's history, none included all of those matters of relevance to the students in the particular type of program – rather, these separate regulations mainly covered the issues that were seen as special to that type of program. Moreover, some issues applying to research programs were in the general regulations.

A number of possible arrangements were considered, with the final proposal being to incorporate the separate sets of regulations into the general regulations. This was based on the premise that combining the regulations into a single comprehensive set that is then arranged according to the various matters that are regulated for any student undertaking a program at CSU (admission, credit, etc) is both a reasonable and streamlined way to enable students or staff to then directly access whatever issue is of concern at a given time, without the need to consult more than one set of regulations. This approach would also enable inconsistencies to be addressed both by enabling the removal of existing inconsistencies (and gaps) during the process of integrating the various regulations, and by facilitating ongoing consistency in the regulations across types of programs where consistency is deemed to be important.

A major refinement was that the existing assessment regulations and examination regulations, both of which applied entirely to coursework subjects (including those that were offered in research programs), were combined into a single set of regulations for coursework subjects (Part G: Assessment Regulations: Coursework Subjects). All of the regulations that applied to the assessment of research (i.e. theses and other examinable works) were then grouped into a separate set of regulations (Part H: Supervision and Assessment Regulations: Theses and Other Examinable Works). These regulations were also seen as the logical place to include supervision, since it had no counterpart in coursework subjects. The new arrangement also had the advantage of still offering a separate set of regulations for the management of the piece of research being undertaken, whilst having this set of regulations sit comfortably and logically within the overall framework of regulations.

Progress and Supervision – Examinable Research Work

As mentioned above, Academic Senate has developed policy on the assessment of research. Key topics covered by this policy are listed below, and in some cases apply both to full research programs and those coursework programs with a research component.

- a) Minimum and maximum periods of candidature.
- b) Progress and probation.
- c) Research proposals.
- d) Resource issues.
- e) Supervision (including Principal Supervisor' Register).
- f) Requirements for theses, portfolios and other types of research work submitted.
- g) Examination of research work.

h) Termination of candidature.

Code of Conduct

Academic Senate's code of conduct for research was replaced in 2007 by Part A: Principles and Practices to Encourage Responsible Research Conduct in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research issued by the National Health and Medical Research Councils, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia.

Tobacco Industry Sponsorship

Senate approved policy on tobacco industry funding in research, in 1994.

Identified Issues

- 1) The policy on research maintenance funds at K1.1 seems very dated, and may not even be descriptive of how processes are carried out at CSU. It may also not be a policy area for Senate.
- 2) K1.2 seems unsuited as a Senate policy, being a set of practical guidelines for overseas travel, for students. It should be removed from the Manual. Similarly the lapsed candidature policy at K1.3 is a very short transition arrangement that has probably expired.
- 3) Section K in general contains mostly remnants of the integration process of the research higher degree regs. BOGS and the RMC where appropriate should determine the future of this section. For example there are staff listed with phone numbers who will likely have either long since left the University, or who will now be doing different things. And there are fees listed for honorariums for external examiners, from 1992.
- 4) Integration of the higher degree regulations caused concern within the University. Some staff now have difficulty in finding relevant policy on higher degrees, although one intent of the integration was to foster greater consistency with other regulations of the University. A set of guidelines for key users of higher degree regulations would be useful.
- 5) Failure of a PhD thesis can only be appealed to the Academic Awards Committee of Academic Senate. This committee no longer exists, so policy will require updating.
- 6) Senate's policy on tobacco industry policy on research may have been superseded by a variety of other codes of conduct and other University instruments. It should be reviewed.

Academic Senate's main course accreditation policy is at section L1.1 of the Academic Manual. A brief summary of accreditation procedures is given below. Section L of the Manual contains all of Senate's course and subject policies.

Approvals are all via Senate pro forma documents, now embedded within CASIMS (Course and Subject Information Management System). All approval pathways described below are managed by CASIMS i.e. it is also a workflow tool. Full details of course approval workflows are available from the Office of Academic Governance, although it is important to note that staff do not need to explicitly know these processes, as they are coded into CASIMS. This goes to the point raised under governance that Senate wherever possible embeds compliance with its policies within operational procedure.

GLOSSARY

AS	Academic Senate
APC	Academic Programs Committee. Committee of the Academic Senate.
BOGS	Board of Graduate Studies. Committee of the Academic Senate.
FCC	Faculty Courses Committee. Committee of the Academic Senate.
FB	Faculty Board. Committee of the Academic Senate.
SB	School Board. Committee of the Academic Senate.
UCPC	University Course Planning Committee. Committee of the Vice-Chancellor.

Approval Processes and Key Committees

Full terms of reference for all Senate committees may be found at:
http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/bcontm.htm

Terms of reference for the UCPC are at: <http://www.csu.edu.au/adminman/gov/gov.htm>

Course accreditation and approval at CSU has been designed as a blend of collegial and executive processes. Academic quality is assessed collegially (peer review of proposals), by a series of committees starting in the Schools, flowing into the Faculties and then in some instances beyond, to senior committees of the Senate and even Senate itself. All of these committees are committees of the Senate, so 'Academic Senate' at CSU is a distributed entity. The UCPC as a committee of the Vice-Chancellor is the critical link between academic and management/executive course approval.

At each stage of course approval executive approval can be substituted for the collegial process. This allows flexibility within the process to cater for circumstances as they arise. Executive action is ratified or noted by the relevant collegial body.

Course Document Types (i.e. accreditation processes)

Planning
Approval
Modification
Review
Phase Out

Detailed requirements for each of these processes, including information required by Senate according to its policies, can be found in the CASIMS guidelines at: http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/CASIMS/

Subject Document Types

New Subject Profile
Revised Subject Profile

SUBJECTS

All new and revised subjects are approved in the following sequence:

SB-FCC-FB

Some subjects go to other committees instead of the School Board, for example discipline-based committees in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture. These aren't official Senate committees, but have been allowed because the final approval point remains the Faculty Board.

COURSES

CSU Course Profile

Determination of the entire profile of courses of CSU is made by the UCPC. The UCPC determines whether a course is to be added to or removed from this profile. There are also sub-set approvals, for example the addition of a location of offering for an existing course, which the UCPC approves as well – see the section below on course modification. The UCPC also annually reviews key course data, such as attrition and progress.

The UCPC undertakes course profile reviews. In practice this occurs when the UCPC believes such a review is warranted. For example, a year is not always a sufficient lapse of time after a review has taken place to make a further assessment of the performance of the overall profile. This involves examining CSU courses and their performance against a set of indicators, and determining which may as a result be phased out i.e. removed from the profile. Faculties may also submit requests to this process to have courses removed from the profile. See also course phase outs below.

Courses may be phased out in a given year, even if a course profile review has not taken place within that year. The Faculty in that case will submit a request to the UCPC.

Types of Course

The different course types offered by CSU are set out in section L1.1 of the Academic Manual. This includes the local award of University Certificate.

Advisory Process

To ensure that the academic standing of courses remains high, Senate requires a course advisory process. The advisory process chosen for the development and review of a particular course or courses should assist in ensuring that:

- the course is current and constitutes an intellectually challenging and stimulating learning experience
- the course has clear and appropriate aims and objectives
- the course content, including teaching and learning experiences and assessment strategies, is at an appropriate level and is consistent with the aims and objectives of the course, and
- the teaching methods are appropriate for the course.

To ensure that courses remain relevant to the professions and industries they serve, the advisory process chosen for a particular course or courses should provide an awareness of:

- the changing needs of the community
- the industry/professional reputation of the course
- the changing focus of those professions and industries, and
- existing, emerging and potential markets.

The minimum requirements of the policy are that, for every course, there must be:

- an identified advisory process in place
- independent external experts included in that process, and
- records of all aspects of the process.

The advisory process chosen may be one that includes a number of courses or be specific to a particular course.

The advisory process chosen may also:

- provide avenues for community input into the enhancement and further development of courses
- encourage recognition of course by relevant bodies, and
- assist in promotion of courses.

It is the responsibility of the Faculty to ensure that the advisory process chosen for each course meets the minimum requirements of the policy and that in the advisory process overall there is the expertise to address all of the objectives of the policy.

Where a course includes specialisations, and a particular specialisation is being added to a course or is being reviewed individually, the advisory process requirements apply for that specialisation.

The records of the advisory process for a particular course are generally kept in CASIMS, as part of course documentation for that course. The details of the advisory process employed for a particular course will be set out in Course Approval and Course Review documents for the course and will describe the mechanics of this process and its outcomes. For a particular specialisation, these details will be set out in the equivalent field in the Course Modification document (to add a specialisation) and the Course Review document.

New courses

A proposal to introduce a new course at CSU must come via a Course Scoping Document to the UCPC. If the UCPC feels the proposal is complex or significant in terms of resources, strategy etc. it will request a full business case. The UCPC will approve (or not) the introduction of the course, at a specified date. It will also attest that resources are available for this course, or will refer the proposal to the Budget Committee if resource implications are significant. It also approves the allocation of load to courses.

After UCPC approval the Faculty prepares a Course Approval Document. This is used to carry out the 'academic' approval of the course, such as the course curriculum. This approval is carried out via committees of the Academic Senate, as follows:

FCC-FB-APC

A proposal for a research higher degree course has the following approval pathway, after UCPC approval of the Planning component (i.e. the APC is the final approval point only for coursework courses):

FCC-FB-BOGS-AS (NB some Faculties will utilise their Research committee instead of FCC)

Modifications to courses

An existing course may be modified in many different ways. These modifications are all carried out via a Course Modification Document (although this process is currently being further simplified). The type(s) of modifications will then determine the approval pathway for the proposal. For example, a change only to the course structure can be approved by the Faculty Board, whereas the addition of a location of offering will require UCPC approval. Modifications that may be approved by the Faculty Board have the following approval pathway:

FCC-FB

Variation to this pathway, for example to include the UCPC or APC, will involve adding extra steps.

The approved delegations for modification approvals are shown below.

Modification

Change of nomenclature

Change of duration and/or point value

Creation or removal of an exit point only course

Change or addition of a location

Change or addition of a funding source

Change or addition of a mode

Change of Faculty ownership

Addition of a major or minor or phase-out of a minor

Addition or phase-out of a joint study in Bachelor of Business

Addition of a specialisation

Course variant

Change of session type/pattern

Addition of a specialisation to a shell course

Change to admission requirements

Changes to structure and/or subject content of course, including changes to structure/content of existing elective sequences

Final Approval by

APC or Senate

APC or Senate, and UCPC if any resource issues

APC

UCPC

UCPC

UCPC, and APC if adding DE mode with new subjects

UCPC

APC, and UCPC if any resource issues

APC, and UCPC if any resource issues

APC or Senate, and UCPC if any resource issues

APC, and UCPC if any resource issues

UCPC

APC, and UCPC if any resource issues

Faculty Board

Faculty Board

These delegations are based upon an evaluation by Senate of the complexity and importance of modifications, and which type and level of body (or person) should be ultimately responsible for quality assurance of that modification.

Course reviews

The review is documented and approved via a Course Review Document. The approval pathway for such a document is:

FCC-FB-APC

A Faculty may now also make certain modifications to courses as the result of a course review, for example adding an articulated course, or removing an articulated course, or phasing out the entire course. In such situations there may be a variation to the approval pathway to include the UCPC as well, where appropriate (e.g for phasing out, or when a review proposes a change to the course which has resource implications for the University).

The reviewing of courses is, in practice, a process of constant monitoring to ensure that any course offered by the University maintains its academic standing and remains up to date and relevant to any industries and professions it may serve.

A number of critical factors may influence the scheduling of a major review of a given course, such as the requirements of a professional body which accredits the course, sudden changes in the marketplace, resource factors or individual factors identified by a particular Faculty. Internal review must still occur where a course is also professionally accredited.

The purpose of a major review is to evaluate the quality and performance of the course or specialisation in terms of a number of factors (e.g. academic performance, efficiency, and the capacity of the Faculty to support its profile). This process of evaluation is for the period of time since the introduction of the course or since the previous major review (whichever is the more recent) and on the basis of the outcomes of the advisory process, of a number of indicators and of other relevant information. Full details of this review process may be found in the CASIMS review document guidelines.

Course Coordination

The University is discussing the possible professionalisation of course coordination. There are currently very large numbers of coordinators, which complicates professional development and overall administration of course coordination at CSU. Reducing the numbers of course coordinators substantially (and conversely allowing a wider overview for a suite of courses, for each coordinator), while at the same time increasing the status and expectations of this position, should allow this key activity to grow in importance and standing. From Senate's standpoint an interesting aspect of the proposal is to give the coordinator a much greater role in curriculum development, and the various types of internal and external course monitoring. This should assist in benchmarking activities.

Phasing out of courses

Courses are phased out or removed from the CSU course profile as a result of the course profile review undertaken by the UCPC. As above, Faculties may also individually request that courses be phased out.

Once the UCPC has approved the phasing out of a course, a Course Phase Out Document is used to administer the phasing out. This includes examining any academic and student implications of the course being phased out. The approval pathway for this document is:

FCC-FB-APC

As above, courses are also sometimes phased out as a result of a course review, in which case the Review Document plays the same role as a Phase Out Document, with the same approval pathway.

Suspension of intake to courses

Sometimes a Faculty or the University may wish to continue offering a course, but not in a particular year or session. In this situation a suspension of intakes to the course may be approved. Suspensions of intake are approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who may also refer such a request to the UCPC.

Timelines

Because the University has various administrative functions surrounding course and subject offering, each of the approval pathways above is associated with an approval timeline. For example, new courses must be approved by a certain date to allow marketing materials to be produced, and learning materials to be created and distributed. Courses to be phased out must follow the phase out timeline, to allow sufficient time for consultation with affected parties. Etc.

Advertising of courses

The advertising of courses requires specific approvals. For example, publication of course details in the UAC or VTAC guides requires that a course be fully approved according to the pathways described above. The UCPC has the authority to override some of these steps if it believes a course should be in these guides, but all relevant documentation has not yet been completed. In every case the documentation must then be completed before the course or subject can be offered. Similarly course or subject details contained in the University Handbook must have followed the approval pathways above.

Nomenclature

Course nomenclature is determined within guidelines set by Academic Senate policy. Approved nomenclatures are kept in a Register, maintained by the Office of Academic Governance and published in the Academic Manual.

Shared courses (within CSU)

Where a course is shared by more than one Faculty, a 'host' Faculty is determined by the Faculties, or by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) when Faculties cannot resolve this issue. Approval of shared offerings is also shared between the relevant Faculties.

Courses involving partners

Where a partner is involved in the development and/or delivery of a course, the same approval mechanisms apply as for a standalone CSU course. In other words, a Faculty cannot simply present a business case and contract for such an arrangement without also undertaking the approval documentation and processes described above. The UCPC oversees and approves all course partnership arrangements, including those with offshore partners (in conjunction with Academic Senate's policy on such relationships, at section L9 of the Academic Manual). There may be the additional requirement of approval by the partnership institution.

The main partnership types recognised by the Academic Senate are:

Licensed program – the partner delivers the CSU course. The award is a CSU award, and the partner need not be an award-conferring institution.

Cooperative program – the partner contributes significant intellectual content to a CSU course, and may also be involved in its delivery OR the award is that of the partner, and CSU contributes to the intellectual content and/or delivery of that course.

Integrated program – CSU and an award-conferring partner each contribute to the content of the course. The student receives both the CSU and partner award upon completion.

Joint program – CSU and an award-conferring partner each contribute part of the content of a single course. The award is a joint award of the two institutions i.e. the testamur is a joint testamur, containing the seal of both institutions.

CSU Degree Initiative

The University is currently undertaking a major curriculum review initiative (the “Degree Initiative”, or DI), under Professor Ben Bradley, the Deputy Presiding Officer of Academic Senate. The DI will look at the ways in which the University’s wider plans and graduate attributes are embedded within CSU course material, as well as suggest a comprehensive re-working of course design and review procedures.

Fields of Research

The Research Management Committee oversees the approval of fields of research at CSU. A Faculty’s capacity to support RHD students in a proposed field of research is an essential determinant in Senate’s decision, as is consistency with wider University strategy.

Service Teaching

Senate recognises that discipline specialists will tend to be concentrated in a particular Faculty, and even more so since the recent Faculty re-structure. For this reason it developed policy in the use of service teaching, to assist in the prevention of duplication of effort and expertise across Faculties, and to increase subject choice for students. It also recognises that disciplines themselves will often cross Faculty boundaries, most often in the application or teaching of that discipline (e.g. mathematics is common to many different areas of academic work).

Faculties are expected to refrain from hiring staff in disciplines that are normally overseen by another Faculty. If a course contains service taught subjects, authority for the course resides with the Faculty that owns the course. Staff from one Faculty teaching in subjects of another also constitutes a service teaching arrangement. Deans attest to service teaching arrangements during course approvals, with contentious issues referred to the APC for resolution.

Graduate Attributes

Senate first approved a set of graduate attributes in 1994, and they have been amended several times since, most recently in 2007. The CSU Degree Initiative has taken carriage of a more comprehensive treatment of this area.

International Study

In 2005 Senate resolved that undergraduate courses should wherever possible provide an opportunity for students to undertake up to one full-time session of study overseas. This study can be equivalent to studies required in their course, or may also be in a non-English language or culture. Senate would expect such study not to be at first-year level.

Nationally and Internationally Outstanding Courses

In 2005 Senate began a policy of recognising courses that are nationally and/or internationally outstanding, according to a set of criteria listed at L22 of the Academic Manual.

Distance Education Materials

Academic Senate has a policy on distance education materials, consisting almost entirely of procedural requirements in areas such as despatch, dates, revision categories, submission, storage etc. However there is also a requirement for the Director of the LMC to report to Senate annually on these matters.

Identified Issues

- 1) Academic Senate has not historically had a formalised role in assessing agreements that involve course offerings. Discussions have commenced on how best to do this. Senate was also asked to develop consistent terminology for third party arrangements, which it did and which is formalised in section L16.1 of the Academic Manual.
- 2) A certain focus for AUQA will be benchmarking or similar quality assessment against *external* indicators and instruments. While Senate does require a significant amount of external review in course reviews and course approval more generally, and academic disciplines underpinning courses in themselves introduce a substantial amount of external benchmarking, it appears that AUQA is looking for even more substantial activity in this area. Some of the monitoring work of the UCPC is relevant here, and UCPC has always worked in conjunction with Senate in this broad policy area.

3) All universities need to find a balance between proper collegial review of academic matters and the need to be able to respond quickly to more commercial or market-oriented needs. There is sometimes a perception at CSU that Senate processes are not sufficiently 'nimble' to be able to support market-driven activity. There is significant scope within the policy and processes however for executive action and for the use of standing committees, decisions via circulation etc. There have also been significant process improvements in recent years, with more to come. There is also a need to recognise prudential regulation as an integral part of the *productive* capacity of an organisation, not only as added-on standards and audit. There will also always be a creative tension between academic quality assurance, which is inherently collegial (peer review is the basis of the entire academic enterprise), and more commercial activity.

4) Course policy requires that Faculties keep a 'portfolio' of course advisory information used in the development of their courses. It's not clear that this occurs, and CASIMS may have assumed this role in any case.

5) Senate policy on service teaching at L8 of the Academic Manual addresses Faculties keeping service teaching agreements. It's not certain that this occurs. Similarly it's not certain that the following occurs: "In the provision of service teaching subjects which are compulsory subjects in another faculty's course(s), the Head of the providing School will provide to the course co-ordinator(s) of the receiving Faculty, no later than one week prior to the offering of the service taught subject, a copy of the subject outline and/or distance education package and written details of staffing arrangements including the name of the subject co-ordinator/convenor."

6) The service teaching dispute resolution procedures described in the Senate policy seem overly legalistic and unlikely to be applied in practice.

7) Course accreditation and approval is sometimes perceived as a bureaucratic, administrative matter rather than as part of a curriculum development and review process. There seems also to be a significant lack of knowledge amongst staff as to the true nature of self accreditation by universities and how this is contextualised within wider public policy and legislation.

8) CSU has many courses. There are ongoing discussions as to whether this is an issue that needs further consideration.

9) Senate's policy on nationally and internationally outstanding courses will shortly be subsumed within the wider 'standards' framework linked to the University strategy.

10) The Subject and Course Availability listings (SAL and CAL) have no Senate policy link, although the SAL previously had such policy. This is probably appropriate, with the increasing shift towards Senate approving the academic content of subjects and courses but remaining at a distance from the management and administration of offerings. The CASIMS v2 project will require Senate to update policy to remove offering-based information wherever possible from academic approvals.

- 11) The policy on DE materials (in section P of the Manual) is almost entirely procedural, and will likely be significantly trimmed in the separation of policy and procedure currently underway for the academic regulations.

Academic policy on prizes is in section M of the Academic Manual. Scholarships are managed by the Office of Corporate Affairs.

Prizes may recognise:

- merit in a subject
- merit in a group of subjects
- merit in practical work, industrial experience, etc
- merit in a stage or year of a course, or
- merit in a course.

Senate can also approve a prize on other grounds, if requested.

Prizes may be offered within a Faculty, across Faculties or without reference to any Faculty, in which case it is deemed a University prize. Prize donors are normally from outside the University, but can also be internal.

Prize winners are selected at the beginning of each academic year, based upon student performance in the previous year. Prizes are awarded at graduation ceremonies, for graduating students, and at faculty ceremonies for continuing students. Often Faculties combine prize giving with the Dean's List ceremony.

Dean's List

The Dean's List recognises outstanding academic performance by undergraduate students within a Faculty. Not all Faculties issue Dean's List awards. To qualify for such an award, students must achieve at a level specified by Senate, with some discretion to the Dean for those students who are enrolled in less standard patterns. Students in add-on honours courses are not eligible for the award.

Identified Issues

- 1) The administration of prizes is a subset of event and customer relationship management. These are particular skills requiring significant time to carry out. Many prize donors are prominent members of the community, and prize presentation is a very public event for the University. There is therefore significant risk in not allocating proper, skilled resources to the administration of prizes, and at the moment the allocation of this work is sophisticated and logical, but not optimum from the event and customer relationship management standpoint.
- 2) Following from 1), like scholarships prizes are a link from the University to both the professions and the wider community. It is therefore important that they be well managed, as they represent an opportunity to build and strengthen such relationships.
- 3) Prizes are expected to have a minimum value of \$250, but this is not generally enforced.
- 4) Many universities will be including prize information on the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS). To allow CSU to do this prizes would need to be captured in some sort of system/database way. There is a possibility this could be done via CASIMS.
- 5) Selection of prize winners occurs at the very start of the academic year, when staff are not always available or are busy preparing for the coming year. There is little that can be done to avoid this issue.
- 6) Senate's policy on Australian Postgraduate Awards (M8 of the Academic Manual) may need review.

Academic Senate has policy on residential schools at section P of the Academic Manual.

Residential schools may be course-based or subject-based, and either on campus or off campus. Senate specifies the purpose of residential schools as: “to achieve outcomes, in subjects or courses, that are not achievable elsewhere in distance education teaching or for other reasons cannot be addressed without face-to-face delivery.”

Faculty Boards approve the offering and characteristics of residential schools. Schools should be offered in inter and intra session breaks, on weekends if required but not on public holidays. Where a school needs to be held outside these times it requires approval by the Dean of the Faculty, who must then consult with Divisions to ensure that services will be available to students. Residential schools are also expected to include some time to allow students to access such services.

Off campus location schools or components of schools are not permitted to require additional cost to students above the travel and accommodation associated with attendance at the school. There are also rules for the cancellation of residential schools, and for any modifications to school arrangements. Support services for residential schools held off campus are the responsibility of the Faculty.

Quality Assurance

Senate policy stipulates the following.

All Schools and Divisions are required to carry out their own quality assurance checks to ensure that information relating to residential school arrangements are accurate, received by, and acted upon by all parties.

The accessibility and quality of support services should be independently reviewed within all service areas, before and after each prescribed residential period. The aim to establish service level agreements and/or new services as appropriate (eg., reviewing operating hours that are fixed or require greater flexibility) should also be considered by each service area.

Student Services is required to collate the independent reviews of all service areas regarding the effective delivery of services to students during residential school periods and provide this information in an annual report to the Senior Executive Committee (SEC).

Identified Issues

- 1) The policy on residential schools has not been reviewed in a decade. With the USM project this area has been explored thoroughly, and policy can be updated at the completion of that process.
- 2) Residential schools are difficult and sometimes expensive to run. They also create very difficult issues relating to services provided to students outside of standard session times, and about the quality of the student experience for attendees of these schools. The University is aware of these issues and has been discussing them in depth.
- 3) The administrative guidelines that accompany the Senate policy on residential schools need some editorial updating. It's also not clear if the quality assurance requirements set out there are being followed.

Academic Senate has policy on the student evaluation of learning and teaching, at section P7 of the Academic Manual. The University's student evaluation processes extend beyond what is contained within Academic Senate policy, and Senate has specifically stated that such evaluation is only one component in the improvement of learning and teaching.

The policy itself provides the best summary of the evaluation, and is reproduced below. Note that the University Course Planning Committee and Learning and Teaching Committee review evaluation data annually to identify trends and determine remedies.

The current instrument approved for Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching includes the following arrangements:

- All subjects at CSU are surveyed each time they are offered, regardless of enrolment numbers.
- The survey includes a 'core' of standard items with an emphasis on actionable items as well as an item bank of additional optional items (the online evaluation of subjects core items are at <http://www.csu.edu.au/division/landt/evalunit/itembank/CurrentCoreItems.pdf> and the categorised item bank is at <http://www.csu.edu.au/division/landt/evalunit/itembank/oesitbank.pdf>).
- The survey instrument focuses on enhancing teaching and includes provision for written comments (note: written comments which are harassing, sexist or racist are to be screened).
- There is an approved format for, and provision for, the reporting of data from surveys (see 3.1 below).
- Partner organisations may use a similar survey instrument, rather than the CSU instrument, subject to the approval of the Director, CELT.
- There is an approved format for, and provision for, course feedback (see 3.2 below).
- A single on-line survey, allowing completion and submission on-line, is used for all cohorts, except where partner organisations use a similar survey.
- A 7-point Likert scale is used for core items and items from the item bank for an on-line survey.

- Enhancements made by Subject Coordinators to a subject and/or teaching as an outcome of student feedback is communicated to students in an appropriate on-line site and in a timely manner.
- There is a dedicated University website established to contain appropriately aggregated data collected from on-line surveys. The data is presented in a way that does not identify individual academic staff.

Format and Provisions for Reporting Surveys

- Scores on core items in the instrument are to be reported to the Subject Coordinator and Head of School.
- Scores reported to Heads of Schools are to be used to support developmental processes only.
- Reports on subjects are to include response rates overall and by cohort.
- Comments in the instrument shall be reported to the Subject Coordinator only.
- The Subject Coordinator shall be responsible for making scores known to other members of the teaching team, with comments identifying individuals to be provided to the individuals only.
- Scores on core items are to be aggregated by School and discipline for reporting to Faculty and School Board.
- Schools are to provide an annual continuous improvement report for teaching based on analysis of the feedback and other information by Subject Coordinators and the Head of School. Copies of the report are to be forwarded to the Director, CELT; Faculty Board and Learning and Teaching Committee. Provision of an annual continuous improvement report is, to be a condition of PBF (Performance Based Funding) for teaching.
- Reports on subjects and aggregated reports by School and discipline allow comparison over time for core items.

Format and Provision of Course Feedback

- Course based focus groups of randomly sampled students are to be required as part of the course review process.
- Groups be convened by a person nominated by the Dean, in consultation with the Director, CELT.
- The focus group process be supported by the Evaluation Unit of CELT.

- The Second Year Student Experience Survey report by course and cohort.

Identified Issues

- 1) There are no obvious issues with student evaluation processes beyond the inherent limitations of any survey, and the difficulties in accurately and usefully using the data. Most key management data at CSU is accompanied by the opportunity to provide contextual commentary and response.

Communication with Students

In 1998 Academic Senate developed policy to provide a framework for communication between students and academic staff. The objective of the policy is to facilitate effective and timely communication by students with academic staff, taking into account amongst other more administrative matters: modes of communication; subject outline information; procedures for partner institutions; offshore students; forums, and non-compliance. There are also provisions for dealing with students who are resident in correction centres.

Key aspects of the policy include:

- taking account of the various means of communication that are available (synchronous, eg face to face and telephone, and asynchronous, eg email, fax, online, web forum)
- acknowledging the diversity of student cohorts in both their support needs and communication patterns
- ensuring that students receive prompt response to communications with staff and are adequately informed of approved staff absences and procedures for obtaining advice during such periods, and
- identifying the means by which students enrolled in specific subjects are informed of the details of teaching staff (their names and full contact details).

The Student Charter

The Cycle 1 audit identified issues with the CSU Student Charter. It is currently being reviewed by a working party and in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and the Deans.

Student Records

Senate has policies on the access to student records and assessment items, and on the disposal of student records.

Identified Issues

- 1) There is recent case history in the university sector of students wanting access to raw examination marks and scripts, and other assessment-related information. Students have been successful in court in gaining access to some of this information, and Senate might need to look at these policies again in light of these decisions.
- 2) It's not clear to what extent the rules for communication with students are being followed, and it's a policy area where it is almost impossible to build compliance into operational procedures.

In its Audit Manual (version 4.1), AUQA has published at Appendix C a list of ‘general reference points’ against which each University will be assessed in Cycle 2 audits. Most are statutory and other sector-wide (or even international) guidelines against which universities are expected to compare their performance. An assessment of Senate’s performance and function was provided below some time ago, and may in many instances have been overtaken since by work in Faculties and Divisions.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Section 3 of the CSU Course Accreditation policy, at L1.1 of the Academic Manual (http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/docs/l1-1.rtf), provides the following information regarding compliance with AQF guidelines in CSU courses

Courses at CSU are expected to comply with AQF guidelines, and the attestation from the Dean of a Faculty proposing a course certifies that this is the case, for that course.

The attestations from Deans are created during the process of course approval, via the University’s course approval system (CASIMS).

Additionally course documentation requires a description of how the aims and objectives of a course “conform to the AQF guidelines for courses at the level of the course being reviewed (e.g., bachelor degree).” (See CASIMS course document guidelines, under “Aims” and “Objectives”.) These are also reviewed at each course review.

During course approval members of the Faculties and of the Academic Programs Committee, who also sit on the faculty committees, assess course proposals against these and other requirements. Additionally the APC will periodically audit course offerings across a range of categories, including AQF compliance where this is thought to be an issue.

AVCC 2001, Policy Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages

The report commissioned from PhillipsKPA by MCEETYA and DEST, delivered in June 2006 and called “Giving Credit Where Credit is Due” was used as the basis for an institutional self-assessment of CSU credit practices in 2007. The PhillipsKPA report included a set of guidelines that are proposed to replace the existing listed guidelines, as a single source of guidance for the sector:

- AVCC Policy Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages
- MCEETYA Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation and Principles for Good Practice Information Provision
- AQF National Guidelines on Cross-sector Qualification Linkages.

Accordingly Academic Senate’s compliance with the AVCC guidelines was assessed via this institutional self-assessment, initiated by the Academic Secretary and APC in 2007. A copy of this report can be obtained from the Office of Academic Governance.

AVCC 2005, Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities

This document has been referred to the Division of Student Administration and to Office of International Relations for comment, as much of the implementation of these guidelines rests with those sections.

Senate-related comments on the premises and guidelines are below.

Premises

8 – success in a course for international students is assessed using equivalent processes as those used for other CSU students. This may include moderation of assessment carried out by a partner.

10 – not sure if CSU has a “clearly enunciated policy for the promotion, marketing and delivery of its education services...”.

13 – admission requirements for international students must follow the same standards and policies set out by Senate for other students. These are assessed during course approval and review.

14 – its not clear what our academic programs specifically need to do to “encourage them [international students]to have a positive attitude about Australian education”.

20 & 22 – the quality of academic provision in partnership arrangements is specifically covered by Academic Senate’s policy on third party arrangements (section L9 of the Academic Manual). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has recently requested that Faculties update Senate on compliance with this policy. CSU always cooperates fully with government quality assurance requirements, including governments offshore.

One concern is that often Senate is not involved in the preparation of agreements, and is therefore unable to evaluate academic quality and compliance questions for such agreements prior to them being signed.

21 – in the event of closure of any CSU course/program, students are required to be offered alternative pathways for completing the program to which they were admitted. These requirements are detailed in the Academic Senate phase out documentation contained within CASIMS.

23 – it would be up to the Faculty to ensure that programs “are sensitive to the educational, social, cultural and legal context of the countries in which they are delivered.” Senate makes no specific evaluation using these criteria.

24 – the relationship of CSU to its agents and partners is specified in the Academic Senate policy on third party arrangements at L9 of the Academic Manual. Some programs are also ‘mainstreamed’, in which case the delivery of the program is deemed to be by CSU itself.

Guidelines

43 – not sure if our agents are provided with training in ‘academic equivalence’. There are certainly mechanisms for academic equivalence with partners, but it’s not clear if the agents get this sort of training.

45 – admission standards for international students are the same as for other CSU students.

46 – admission criteria, credit and articulation information are published in the University handbook, in the credit precedents database and also in marketing material for courses.

47 – Senate would assume that international candidates selected for admission would be selected using the criteria for each course and according to Senate policy and procedure. This would therefore be a compliance question for Faculties and Divisions. Given that admission processes and policies are standard across the University, the compliance is in effect hard-coded in operations.

48 – Academic Senate has detailed policy on language requirements, in its admission regulations.

56.6 – the UCPC monitors course performance data such as attrition and progress. This has not traditionally been done specifically for international students.

58 – quality assurance requirements for delivery are assumed to be equivalent irrespective of location. This may in practice mean a variety of different processes, such as moderation i.e. the same processes may not always apply, but the same standards and outcomes are expected.

61 – academic progress and appeals mechanisms are equivalent for international and other CSU students. There may be a question as to whether international (offshore) students receive the same level of support for appeals.

69 (all sub-clauses) – as in 20 & 22 above, Academic Senate is not currently involved in the process of drawing up agreements, so cannot directly assure that each of the requirements listed has been met.

71.4 & 71.5 – all academic quality assurance carried out with partner operations is handled by Faculties. Senate’s policy on third party agreements requires reporting of this work, and it may also be captured as part of course reviews.

AVCC 2005, Universities and their Students: Principles for the Provision of Education by Australian Universities

University Responsibilities: Student Expectations

The Academic Senate policies underpinning the provision of all courses are “clear, consistent, rational and understandable”, although Senate is also currently working to refine policy so that there is a clearer distinction between outcomes/standards, procedures and delegations.

Course Development and Approval

Academic Senate’s main course accreditation policy is at L1.1 of the Academic Manual. It also has policies on assessment, communication with students etc. These combined satisfy the requirements of this part of the expectations.

Some elements listed such as student support will also be the responsibility of the Divisions and Faculties.

Admission Arrangements

The Academic Senate policies on admission (section D of the Academic Manual) detail its compliance with these expectations.

The principle of minimum disadvantage to enrolled students due to course changes is embedded within policy on course modification, review and phase out, within the course documentation in CASIMS.

Teaching and Learning

7 - The University is developing an Indigenous Education Strategy.

8 – requirements for access to staff, including a student charter and access to forums, are detailed in Academic Senate policy in section P of the Academic Manual.

9 – some faculty-level committees of the Academic Senate and the Academic Senate have student representation. Also appeals committees for academic appeals has such representation. Working parties of Academic Senate will consult with student representative bodies, and may also have student members.

10 - academic quality with partners is assured via L9 of the Academic Manual, Academic Senate's policy on third party arrangements.

11 - all courses of the University are expected to meet the same Senate quality requirements and mechanisms.

Assessment

Academic Senate's assessment policy (section G of the Academic Manual) covers all requirements of this section. Additionally its Student Academic Misconduct Policy and the CSU Avoiding Plagiarism program cover expectation 17.

Appeals and Grievances

18, 19, 20 & 27 - appeals and sanctions for academic progress misconduct, exclusion, review of grade etc. all meet the expectations/requirements of this section. Procedures and details can be found in the Academic Manual.

Information

22 - the University handbook is the authoritative source for students of course and subject information. The Handbook also provides links to all relevant regulations.

23 - subject levels are distinguished using the University's subject coding system. This is mostly reliable.

24 - Senate requires subject information for the delivery of a subject in each session to be summarised in a subject outline. This will shortly be replaced by 'mandatory subject information'.

25 - students' personal information is governed by the relevant privacy legislation. Academic Senate also has a policy on student records at section S of the Academic Manual.

Student Responsibilities: University Expectations

The listed expectations are student responsibilities, although the University has greatly facilitated these via mechanisms such as the e-box, websites and the student charter.

A. GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING AND MONITORING ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Support for, and responsibilities of, students

Support for students

10 - the student charter will provide an outline of rights and responsibilities of students. It is currently being reviewed as a result of recommendations arising from the first round of AUQA auditing.

11 - outcomes of the programs and awards of the University are described in the University handbook, and in more detail in the aims and objectives within course documentation, in CASIMS.

12 – these broad requirements are catered for in a range of Senate policies(assessment, appeals etc.).

13 – this pre-admission information is largely the responsibility of Student Administration and Marketing. The Office of Academic Governance oversees authoritative course and subject information.

15 - all Academic Senate policies are accessible to students, and are linked from the University handbook and other University information sources, such as Student Administration and Student Services.

17 - the Academic Senate policy on communicating with students sets out access requirements for staff, and the assessment policy details the nature of feedback to students on their work.

18 - Academic Senate has discussed the provision of support services for students undergoing a transition between education sectors, for example in its self-assessment against PhillipsKPA/DEST guidelines for articulation. Some Faculties have also instigated such support programs.

19 - academic progress is trackable by students via the implementation (by Student Administration) of Academic Senate's progress policy. This includes a set of indicators of progress so students know when they are 'at risk'. Senate has no policy on course materials for students with disabilities, although this would be managed more at the Faculty/delivery level.

21 - student representation is found on many of Senate's committees, including the main body and also most of its working parties.

22 - Academic Senate has a policy on student evaluation of learning and teaching, at P7 of the Academic Manual.

23 - increasing responsibility for learning over time is embedded in a variety of ways within Senate policy and practice. For example higher level subjects i.e. normally those where the student has already completed significant amounts of study in other subjects, will have higher (and therefore often more 'independent') assessment requirements. Academic misconduct policy explicitly recognises the role of student experience in determining how much responsibility a student has for their own learning and therefore misconduct, at different stages of their studies.

24-26 - the student charter is currently being reviewed, and would be the most appropriate instrument to measure compliance against these requirements.

27&30 - *while the University has extensive support for learning and teaching, it is not a detailed focus of Academic Senate policy. For example Senate has no major policy on teaching and learning, as it does for assessment, course accreditation etc.*

29 - all aspects of course/subject design and delivery have a collegial basis at CSU.

30 - all Academic Senate policies are collected within the Academic Manual, for access by staff and students. Support Divisions also embed regulation-related advice to students within their processes.

32 - the University's "CSU Degree" initiative is examining issues such as lifelong learning across all of the CSU offerings.

34 & 35 - assessment criteria are embedded within the 'subject outline', with each subject having an associated outline for each session in which it is delivered. This will be replaced by 2010 with "Mandatory Subject Information", integrated with the University online learning and teaching system (Interact).

36 - see the Academic Senate policy on assessment at G1 of the Academic Manual.

37-44 - see Academic Senate assessment policy at section G1 of the Academic Manual. *'Consistent, comparable grading standards' will likely be an AUQA focus, and comparability is not a strong focus in the CSU policy in the benchmarking sense.*

45 - the University's Learning and Teaching Plan is the relevant high-level planning instrument for these issues.

46 - the University Course Planning Committee monitors these sorts of indicators each year. They are also examined during course review by Faculties.

47 - Academic Senate has several learning and teaching policies, and the senior Learning and Teaching committee in the University. Senate may also comment and advise senior management and Council on any academic matter, including learning and teaching.

49 - Academic Senate complies with all of the relevant clauses here.

52 - 56 - all course approval, review, modification and phase out is covered by policy and documentation requirements, established by the Academic Senate. *There are fewer policy and procedure instruments for subject phase out.* All third party programs also require full CSU internal approval using these same policies and procedures.

57 (all clauses) - see the university policy on course review, in section L1.1 of the Academic Manual and in CASIMS course review guidelines.

B. GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING AND MONITORING ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN HIGHER DEGREES

See sections L, H and K of the Academic Manual for policy in these areas. Service Divisions (Student Administration, Centre for Research and Graduate Training, Office of International Relations, and Student Services, most prominently) are responsible for many of the listed requirements.

C. PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Most generally, Academic Senate's policy on third party arrangements (section L9 of the Academic Manual) is its main relevance to this section. Most of the requirements and guidelines listed would be more the responsibility of the Office of International Relations, the Division of Marketing and Student Administration. *It would be useful to check if they are aware of these guidelines.*

8 - academic performance is the only criterion considered for success in a course at CSU.

13 - selection/admission criteria for international students are equivalent to those for any other CSU student.

19, 20 & 24 - Academic Senate requires quality assurance for all partner operations (e.g. via its policy at L9 of the Academic Manual, but also all policy requirements must be applied in an equivalent manner to all students.

21 - all non-international students of CSU are given the opportunity to complete alternative pathways should the course in which they enrolled be suspended, phased out or modified. *It's not clear that this is explicitly applied for international students, although nothing in Academic Senate policy prevents this.*

45 – 48 - dealt with above.

54.1 - much of this information is summarised for all students within the University Handbook (now exclusively online, so accessible to international students). Service Divisions are responsible for administering most of these items.

56.6 - I'm not certain to what extent CSU explicitly monitors international student satisfaction, performance and graduation rates.

58 - all Academic Senate quality assurance mechanisms apply equally (or with demonstrated equivalence) for onshore and offshore operations.

60 - there are no specific Senate requirements to be able to relate learning in Australia to an international student's home environment.

61 - academic progress and appeal mechanisms are equivalent for all CSU students. For offshore international students Faculties develop equivalent arrangements for appeals.

64 - from the standpoint of equivalence for offshore students, note that the guidelines here talk only of 'minimum requirements' and 'comparable levels', and that the Australian university should "endeavour to provide" equivalent services.

64.2 - information about courses and appeal processes etc. is readily available online, and more generally these support services for students in offshore locations are managed under arrangements determined in the agreement with the partner.

65 - many of the requirements here would be covered by Academic Senate's policy on third party arrangements (section L9 of the Academic Manual).

69 - section L9.

UNESCO/OECD 2005, *Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*

[Referring only to 'Guidelines for higher education institutions/providers'.]

(a) Academic Senate requires all course delivery to be of equivalent standard, and that all quality assurance policy and procedures be applied, irrespective of location or mode of delivery.

(b) CSU utilises a collegial academic governance model, with the academic senate comprised of a range of collegial bodies (sub-committees) with broad representation, overseen by a single, overarching executive committee.

(c) Course development and review procedures at CSU enlist a wide range of 'stakeholders', including staff, students, professional associations, industry etc.

(d) CSU has significant experience with consultation of accreditation and quality assurance bodies in other countries. For example accreditation of its programs in Ontario involves extensive consultation and accreditation with Canadian authorities.

(e) and (f) Faculties maintain a network of contacts both within Australia and overseas for the purpose of evaluating qualifications and practices.

(h) Internal quality assurance arrangements for courses are published in CSU's Academic Manual. External quality assurance arrangements are common to the sector, for example via AUQA. Professional recognition of CSU qualifications is detailed in both the University handbook and course marketing material. Knowledge, understanding and skills are summarised in the most detailed away within individual subject outlines, which are renewed for each session of offering of a subject.

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2005, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

This is a report of the European community's ongoing development of a quality assurance framework for higher education, for Europe. As such it is mostly high level and includes the establishment of national bodies that would be the equivalent of AUQA and the AQF (for example) here.

Academic Programs Committee will be considering this document at its December 2008 meeting, for advice to Academic Senate.

AUQA has published a “Framework for Standards, Evidence and Outcomes” to guide universities in meeting the additional requirements of Cycle 2 audits. “Fitness for purpose”, the guiding methodology of the Cycle 1 audits, will also be a feature of Cycle 2 audits, but will be accompanied by an assessment of accountabilities to ‘external reference points’. (These will include those covered in part 17 above.) Completed Cycle 2 audits at other universities suggest that this will be a dominant concern of auditors.

Additionally AUQA will “measure the standards an institution is actually achieving.” For the Cycle 2 audits, AUQA defines a standard as *an agreed specification or other criterion used as a rule, guidelines, or definition of a level of performance or achievement*.

Academic Senate is now compiling a benchmarking document, using the AUQA framework as one of the main structuring elements. It will include references to CSU activity in each of the framework areas. The standards paper prepared by the Deputy Vice-Chancellors at CSU will also be incorporated within the document, as will feedback received from the University on reporting to Senate.

Below is a summary of notable points from completed Cycle 2 audits at other universities, with relevance to the work of Academic Senate. At the time of writing these were:

University of Newcastle
Swinburne University of Technology
Southern Cross University
Griffith University.

1. All reports emphasise the importance of standards applied consistently across all of a university's operations. Equivalence.
2. All reports focus very heavily upon the definition and application of standards. Accompanying this is a heavy emphasis upon appropriate and consistent moderation.
3. IELTS levels and application are commonly mentioned. Student support is also a heavy focus, both for offshore and onshore students.
4. Newcastle is urged to go beyond a register of reviews towards a full policy on reviews.
5. Newcastle is urged to make its own self-review of Senate more wide-ranging, and interestingly is also encouraged to consider regular changes to the Senate leadership team, and the age-mix of members.
6. Swinburne is encouraged to include offshore staff in its governance arrangements.
7. Graduate attributes and how they are embedded and assessed are a feature of all reports.
8. Southern Cross is commended for ensuring it receives comparable feedback on subjects from all cohorts, including offshore.
9. Southern Cross is asked to ensure its marketing material accurately reflect its admission rules and its external recognition.
10. Southern Cross is urged to cease offering one of its programs in Chinese. This contradicts the implicit endorsement of offering in other languages in the report on Griffith.
11. Griffith is developing a formal benchmarking framework for the entire University.
12. Griffith is urged to consider a broader range of learning and teaching KPIs "in order to set and maintain appropriate academic standards." It is also commended for taking an increasingly 'evidence-based' approach to quality assurance and academic integrity.
13. Griffith's academic integrity scheme bears a strong resemblance to CSU's (the report mentions that they analysed other universities' procedures when creating it).