

Cycle 5 Academic Audit Framework

January 2013

*Te Pokapū Kōunga
Mātauranga mō
ngā Whare Wānanga
o Aotearoa*



AQA

Academic
QualityAgency
For New Zealand Universities

Cycle 5 Academic Audit Process

Cycle 5 academic audits of New Zealand universities will be undertaken between 2013 and 2017.

Key principles underpinning AQA academic activities are:

- peer review
- evidence-based
- externally benchmarked
- enhancement-led.

Audits are carried out by panels of trained auditors who are selected from universities' senior academic staff and other professionals with knowledge of academic auditing and evaluation. Each panel includes an overseas external auditor. An audit begins with a process of self-review leading to an audit portfolio that the university uses to report on its progress towards achieving the goals and objectives related to the focus of the audit. The audit panel verifies the portfolio through documentary analysis, interviews and site visits.

Final audit reports are publicly available.

Reports commend good practice and make recommendations intended to assist the university in its own programme of continuous improvement. Progress on the recommendations is submitted to the AQA Board in a follow-up report 12 months later. A further report on progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous audit also forms part of the self-review process in the next audit round.

Cycle 5

Academic Audit

Framework

The Cycle 5 academic audit is to be framed around academic activities related to teaching and learning and student support. The key **Academic Activity Themes** which have been identified and which form the framework for both the self-review and the academic audit are:

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- 1 Leadership and Management of Teaching and Learning

 - 2 Student Profile: Access, Transition and Admission Processes

 - 3 Curriculum and Assessment

 - 4 Student Engagement and Achievement

 - 5 Student Feedback and Support

 - 6 Teaching Quality

 - 7 Supervision of Research Students.
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The **audit framework** covers activities and quality assurance processes which might be expected as fundamental in a contemporary university of good standing. The framework articulates these expectations in a series of **guideline statements**.

For each academic activity theme, universities should address not just whether they do undertake the activities or processes identified in the guideline statements, but also evaluate how well they do so, and on what evidence they base their own self-evaluation. From their own self-evaluation, areas and strategies for improvement might be identified.

The **Cycle 5 Academic Audit Handbook** provides more information on the kinds of evidence and indicators which might be appropriate for each expectation referred to in the guidelines.

Throughout the academic activity areas identified in the framework, attention will be paid to such features as different modes of delivery and acknowledgement of learner diversity (e.g., international students; on-campus/off-campus). Unless otherwise stated, all activities and processes relate to postgraduate as well as undergraduate study. Where appropriate, specific attention might be paid to special student groups but unless otherwise stated it is assumed processes discussed apply to all students similarly.

The framework was developed after consultation with universities and other key stakeholders. It reflects relevant aspects of:

- The Education Act 1989
- Tertiary Education Commission priorities 2010–2015
- University obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.



Cycle 5 Guideline Statements

1 Leadership and Management of Teaching and Learning

1.1 Delegations

Universities should have clear delegations for decision-making related to teaching and learning quality and research supervision, and for accountability for quality assurance of programmes and courses.

1.2 Strategic and operational planning

Universities should have appropriate strategic and operational planning documents which include objectives related to student achievement and teaching quality, with key performance indicators which inform academic quality assurance processes.

1.3 Student input

Universities should facilitate student input to planning, policy development and monitoring of key academic activities.

1.4 Infrastructure

Universities should have strategies and/or use processes for ensuring that their teaching and learning spaces and facilities are appropriate for their teaching and learning needs.

1.5 Information resources

Universities should use processes for ensuring that their information resources are appropriate and sufficient for research-informed teaching and learning.

1.6 Risk management

Universities should have recovery plans and procedures which are designed to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning in instances of infrastructure system failure.

2 Student Profile: Access, Admission and Transition Processes

2.1 Admission and selection

Universities' admission and selection policies and practices should be clear and publicly available to students.

2.2 Access and transition

Universities should use policies and/or procedures which are designed to assist the access and transition of equity groups or other priority groups.

2.3 Academic advice

Universities should use processes for providing academic advice and course information to both new and continuing students.

3 Curriculum and Assessment

3.1 Programme approval

Universities' internal course and programme approval processes must meet national (CUAP/NZQF) expectations and should include opportunity for input from stakeholders (including Māori) where appropriate.

3.2 Graduate attributes

Universities should have clearly-defined intended graduate outcomes (graduate attributes) which are publicly available and are accessible to students and staff.

3.3 Graduate outcomes

Universities should have processes for ensuring students have the opportunity to meet the intended graduate outcomes (graduate attributes) during their period of study.

3.4 Programme review

Universities should have regular reviews of programmes and courses, including external accreditation reviews, which include input from students and other stakeholders and which are used to ensure curriculum quality.

3.5 Benchmarking programmes

Universities should use processes for benchmarking curriculum and assessment standards to ensure they are nationally and internationally appropriate. (See also 7.4 re thesis assessment)

3.6 Assessment

Universities should use documented procedures for monitoring and moderating assessment processes and standards. (See also 7.4 re thesis assessment)

3.7 Equivalence of learning outcomes

Universities should have formal mechanisms to ensure that learning outcomes of students in programmes taught on other campuses and/or with partner institutions, including those which are overseas, meet the standards expected by the university on its home campus.

3.8 Academic misconduct

Universities should use procedures for addressing academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

3.9 Assessment in te reo Māori

Universities should have and, where appropriate, use procedures to facilitate assessment in te reo Māori.

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Student Engagement and Achievement

4.1 Student engagement

Universities should use processes for monitoring and enhancing students' engagement with their study and learning.

4.2 Retention and completion

Universities should use processes for assisting the retention, academic success and completion rates for particular groups, including Māori and international students.

4.3 Feedback to students

Universities should use processes for providing feedback to students on their academic progress. (See also 7.3 re thesis students)

4.4 Under-achieving students

Universities should use processes for identifying and assisting students at risk of under-achieving.

4.5 High-achieving students

Universities should use processes for identifying and supporting high-achieving, and/or potentially high-achieving, students.

5 Student Feedback and Support

5.1 Academic appeals and grievances

Universities must have policies and/or procedures which they use to address academic appeals and grievances.

5.2 Learning support

Universities should provide opportunity for all students to access appropriate learning support services, including specialised learning support services for international students and others with particular needs. (See also 4.2 and 5.4)

5.3 Personal support and safety

Universities must provide safe and inclusive campus environments and should provide opportunity for all students to access appropriate pastoral and social support services.

5.4 Support on other campuses

Universities should have formal mechanisms to ensure appropriate learning and pastoral support is provided for students in programmes taught on other campuses and/or with partner institutions, including those which are overseas.

5.5 Feedback from students

Universities should use processes for gaining feedback on student satisfaction with teaching, courses and student services and should be able to demonstrate that feedback is used to inform improvement initiatives. (See also 7.5 re thesis students)

5.6 Feedback from graduates

Universities should use processes for gaining feedback from graduates regarding their satisfaction with their university experience and learning outcomes and should be able to demonstrate that this feedback is used.

6 Teaching Quality

6.1 Staff recruitment and induction

Universities' processes for recruitment and induction should ensure that all teaching staff are appropriately qualified, according to the level(s) at which they will be teaching (i.e., degree level; postgraduate; sub-degree) and that all teaching staff receive assistance to become familiar with their university's academic expectations. (See also 7.1 re thesis supervision).

6.2 Research-active staff

Universities' workload management processes should ensure that degree-level students are taught mainly by staff who are research-active.

6.3 Teaching quality

Universities should use processes for assessing teaching quality and for monitoring and enhancing individual teaching capability of all teaching staff. (See also 6.5 and 7.1 re thesis supervision)

6.4 Teaching development

Universities should provide opportunities for staff to develop their teaching practice, including application of contemporary pedagogical research, use of learning management systems and use of new technologies. (See also 7.1 re thesis supervision).

6.5 Teaching support on other campuses

Universities should have formal mechanisms to ensure appropriate teaching support is provided for staff in programmes taught on other campuses and/ or with partner institutions, including those which are overseas.

6.6 Teaching recognition

Universities' reward processes (promotion; special awards) should recognize teaching capability.

7.1 Qualification of supervisors

Universities should use documented processes for ensuring staff supervising research students are appropriately trained and experienced as supervisors, including processes to enable new or inexperienced staff to gain experience as supervisors.

7.2 Resourcing of research students

Universities should use documented processes for ensuring research students are appropriately resourced to do their research.

7.3 Research supervision

Universities should use documented processes for ensuring supervision of research students is effective and that student progress and support are appropriately monitored.

7.4 Thesis examination

Universities' thesis examination processes should ensure thesis standards are nationally and internationally benchmarked.

7.5 Postgraduate student feedback

Universities should use processes for gaining feedback on student satisfaction with supervision and support for postgraduate students and be able to demonstrate that feedback is used to inform improvement initiatives.

AQA – About our activities

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) is an independent body whose purpose is to contribute to the advancement of university education by:

- Engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality;
- Applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes.

The AQA (formerly known as the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit) was established by New Zealand universities and aims to support universities in achieving standards of excellence in research and teaching. It does so by conducting institutional audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality. It also identifies and disseminates information on good practice in developing and maintaining quality in higher education. Activities include a quarterly newsletter and regular meetings on quality enhancement topics.

The AQA interacts with other educational bodies within New Zealand and with similar academic quality assurance agencies internationally. The Agency is a full member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). AQA has been assessed as adhering to the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice.

Further information is available from our website:
www.aqa.ac.nz

To find out more about the work of the AQA or for additional copies of this brochure, email us at
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*Te Pokapū Kounga Mātauranga
mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa*

Our name

Pokapū = middle, centre, hub, bull's-eye, nucleus, axis, agency

Kounga = quality, the degree of excellence, or the desired standards, in a product, process or project

Mātauranga = education, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill

Flax (Harakeke) as a symbol

In Māori sayings and songs flax (harakeke) is often a metaphor for family bonds and human relationships. Native to New Zealand, harakeke is strong, infinitely versatile and nurturing. It provides a place for the birds to rest and refuel before travelling onwards.

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