

CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

ACADEMIC BOARD – 29 FEBRUARY 2008

CURTIN ACADEMIC STANDARDS

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Academic Board is requested to

- (i) *note progress on the Curtin Academic Standards and the procedures proposed to monitor and report on the achievement of performance outcomes related to the Standards; and*
- (ii) *endorse the ongoing development of the Curtin Academic Standards and supporting materials through the Standards Working Party.*

2. BACKGROUND

AUQA's Cycle 2 Audits¹

AUQA's Cycle 2 audits introduce a new emphasis on academic standards and outcomes that is coupled with an assessment of the extent to which universities are meeting external requirements.

AUQA has adopted the following definition of a standard:

*A **standard** is an agreed specification or other criterion used as a rule, guideline, or definition of a level of performance or achievement.*

Curtin is asked to present evidence in the AUQA Cycle 2 portfolio to explain how it sets standards, whether it has appropriate policies and processes in place, how it monitors the processes through appropriate (qualitative and quantitative) outcome measures, and the standards it achieves i.e. AUQA does not impose an externally prescribed set of standards upon universities, but uses each organisation's own objectives as its primary starting point for audit. AUQA considers the extent to which institutions are meeting these objectives, and how institutions monitor and improve their performance. AUQA also takes into account the requirements of relevant external reference points established to guide institutions in setting their objectives.

Curtin Academic Standards

There are three issues that need to be addressed:

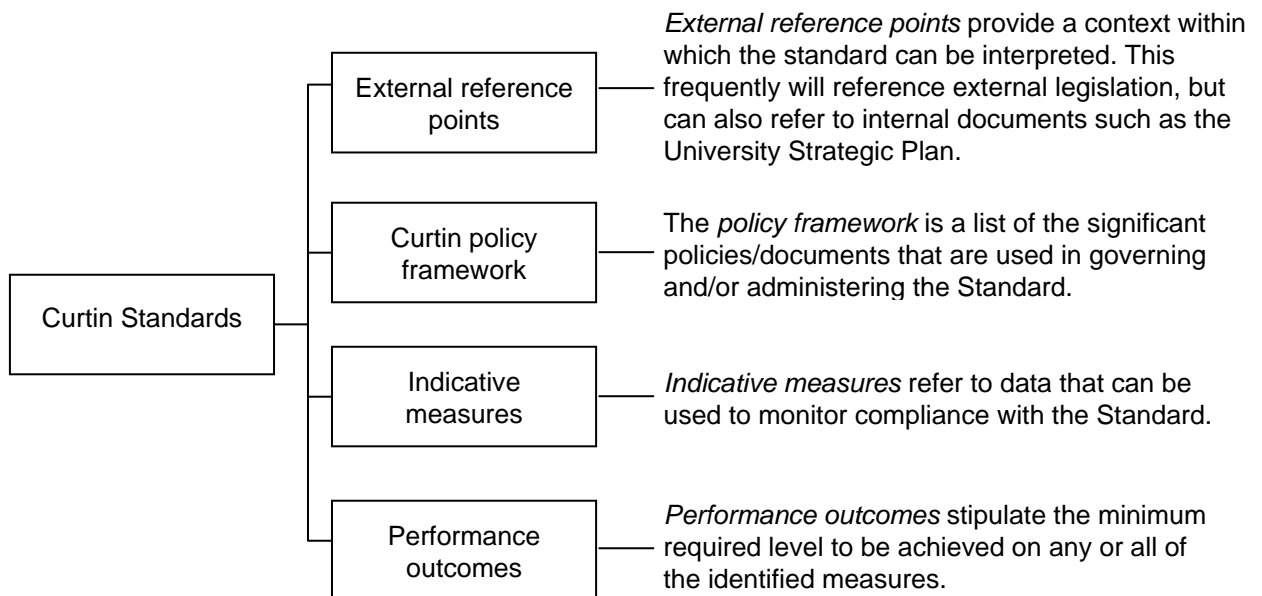
- i. What are Curtin's standards?
- ii. How are they monitored?
- iii. What policies and procedures are in place to ensure standards are achieved?

The Standards Working Party has focussed its attention on the two AUQA themes: Ensuring a Quality Student Experience, and International. A comprehensive matrix has been developed by the Standards Working Party that links the preliminary Standards to Curtin's policy framework and external reference points where these exist. Indicative

¹ See AUQA Audit Manual Version 4.1 URDC 1/08 - 50 of 64

measures and performance outcomes for monitoring the Standards have also been identified (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Curtin's approach to Standards



A Standards Working Party has been meeting regularly to address the first of these questions, and the outcome is shown at Appendix 1.

For the purpose of simplifying the Academic Board discussion, the Standards are presented without the accompanying materials (the external reference points, indicative measures and performance outcomes) that are still under development.

How are the Standards monitored?

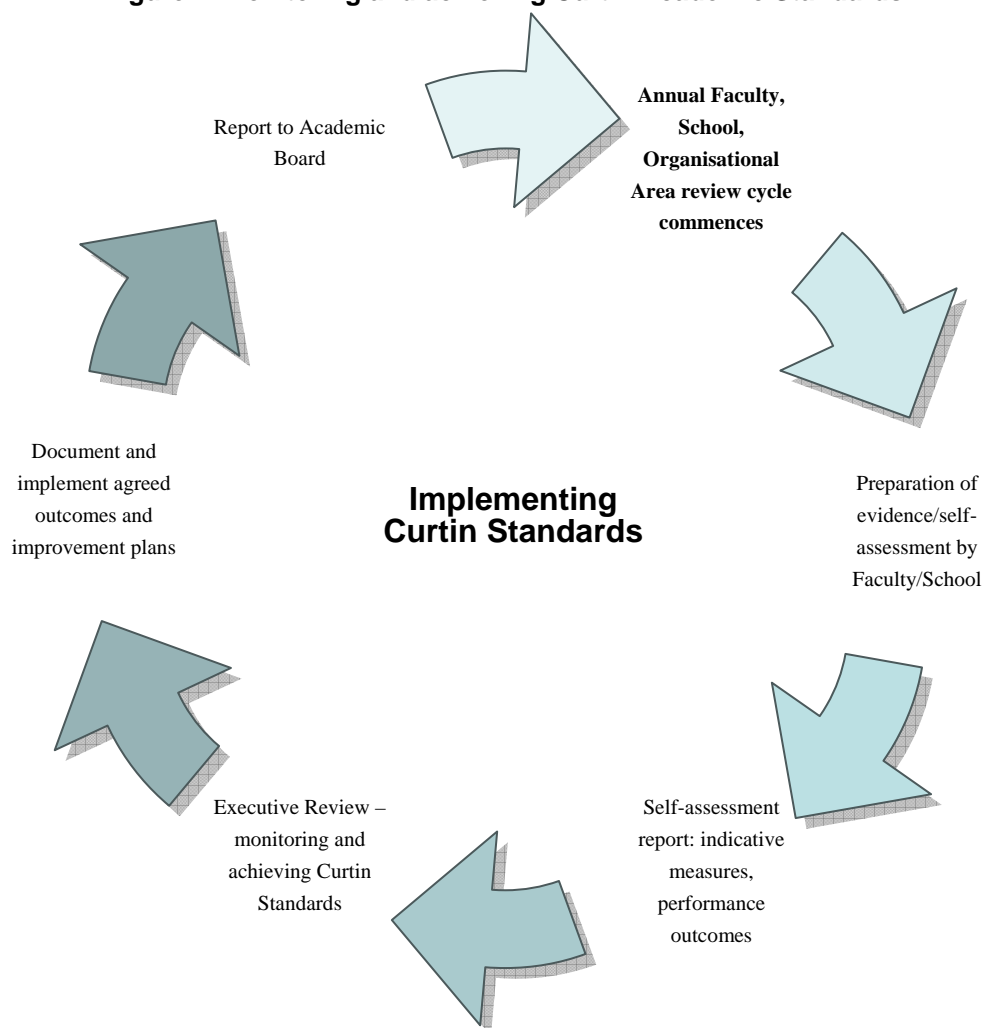
AUQA will want to be assured that Curtin has procedures in place to monitor its Standards through appropriate (qualitative and quantitative) outcome measures.

Once approved, it is envisaged that the Curtin Academic Standards will be monitored annually using the relevant Faculty, School or Organisational Area review cycle that will

- i. sample practice to ensure acceptable compliance;
- ii. check that the policy framework is effective;
- iii. critically reflect on performance outcomes;
- iv. provide feedback through the relevant DVC/PVC to Academic Board on the effectiveness of each organisational area's quality assurance activities, systems and outcomes in relation to monitoring and achieving Curtin Academic Standards (see Figure 2).

Faculties, Schools and Organisational Areas will implement the Standards within their own operational context. Guidance will be provided to assist with the preparation of the evidence portfolio and the selection and use of the indicative measures relevant to specific organisational units.

Figure 2. Monitoring and achieving Curtin Academic Standards



3. **RELATIONSHIP TO UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN/EXISTING UNIVERSITY POLICY**

The development of the Curtin Academic Standards is consistent with the core function of the University to “improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness of all activities”. Reviewing performance against the Standards will be an integral part of the University’s quality, planning and review processes.

4. **BENEFIT(S) OF THE PROPOSAL**

Consolidating Curtin’s academic standards into one coherent document is a significant development that provides a clear, consistent and transparent message, and a common point of understanding, for staff and students alike. The process will inform the University’s Strategic Plan and assist the University in its quality planning cycle. Curtin has been advised that the Standards will be a specific area of interest for the AUQA Cycle 2 audits.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS AND SOURCE(S) OF FUNDING**

It is expected that the implementation of the Curtin Academic Standards and the related monitoring processes will require resources in Faculties, Schools and other organisational areas to be directed towards the establishment of business systems to monitor and report on critical performance outcomes. As these systems are an essential feature of a contemporary business environment, and have a wide range of flow-on

benefits to stakeholders, the University has made a commitment to provide resources to assist with the AUQA preparation.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

The establishment of business systems to monitor and report on critical performance outcomes against the Standards will provide the University with better and more reliable information to manage its risk.

7. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

A Standards Working Party has been meeting regularly during 2007 to address the Curtin Academic Standards, with members comprising:

Professor Jane den Hollander (Chair)
 Mr Charlie Bertilone
 Ms Celia Cornwell
 Dr Paddy Forde
 Ms Sue Jones
 Mr Colin Hoppe
 Ms Vani Lambourne
 Mr Bernie McKenna
 Professor Robyn Quin
 Ms Michelle Rogers
 Mr John Rowe
 A/Professor Sue Trinidad
 Mr Juris Varpins
 Ms Jennie Walsh
 Professor Jo Ward
 Professor Graeme Wright
 Ms Naomi Yellowlees.

The Standards Working Party will continue to meet during 2008, assisted by a smaller sub-group comprising:

Professor Jane den Hollander (Chair)
 Mr Austin Bond
 Mr Colin Hoppe
 Mr Bernie McKenna
 Professor Kevin McKenna
 Professor Robyn Quin
 Ms Michelle Rogers
 Mr John Rowe
 Ms Karen Tang
 Professor Jo Ward

8. FOLLOW-UP ACTION REQUIRED (IF APPROVED)

Ongoing development of the Curtin Academic Standards and related materials through the Standards Working Party.

Implementation Date: Ongoing
Officer Responsible: Professor Jane den Hollander, Chair Standards Working Party

University Seal Required: No

Document Author: Standards Working Party

Date Prepared: 22 February 2008

Submitted by: Professor Jane den Hollander
DVC Academic

If you require any further information to help you make an informed decision on this item please contact a member of the Standards Working Party, or Austin Bond (2194).

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Curtin Academic Standards

Curtin's Standards
related to the AUQA themes:

"Ensuring a Quality Student Experience"

and

"International"

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1. Curriculum

- (a) The syllabus for a course, the learning outcomes and the unit assessments demonstrate that Curtin's graduate attributes and relevant professional accreditation requirements are embedded and assessed at an appropriate level in the curriculum
- (b) The curriculum in every course includes appropriate international, intercultural and indigenous perspectives that reflect Curtin's aim to be an inclusive university.
- (c) Annual and five-yearly (comprehensive) course reviews ensure that curricula are contemporary and meet agreed academic and professional requirements.
- (d) Curriculum design reflects Curtin's strategic direction and expectations as published in the University Learning and Teaching Plan.
- (e) All courses and units, regardless of their location or mode of delivery are equivalent in syllabus, learning outcomes and assessment.

2. Staff

- (a) Staff are professionally and academically competent to teach in their designated areas, and have formal or accredited teaching qualifications and/or relevant teaching experience.
- (b) Staff engage annually in professional development and/or mentoring for advancing skills and knowledge appropriate to their area and level of responsibility.
- (c) Staff cultural competence is ensured through recruitment, induction and professional development.
- (d) New-to-Curtin staff, and staff undertaking new or specialised roles, complete induction and/or training appropriate to their designated roles.
- (e) University rules and guidelines stipulate minimum requirements relating to the supervision of research students, and induction and professional development for supervisors address such matters, including research methods; ethics; confidentiality; data storage and records retention; supervisory practices; University rules, policies; and national legislative requirements.
- (f) Staff teaching Curtin-approved courses through partners or transnational operations have appropriate qualifications, experience, academic preparation, induction and language proficiency to deliver the learning program.

3. Learning Environment

- (a) All students have access to facilities, amenities, activities and services required to successfully participate in their course of study, irrespective of study location or mode of delivery. The University provides
 - i. a safe environment for study, research and other activities that is free from harassment and unlawful discrimination;
 - ii. an appropriate range and quality of student and client-centred academic support services; and
 - iii. an appropriate level of facilities, amenities and activities to balance academic development and personal well-being, irrespective of study location and mode of delivery.
- (b) Learning and administrative support provided to students are documented in Area Plans that specify the level of support, and the range and quality of services and facilities to be provided.
- (c) The University encourages student-led activities that promote community involvement; sporting achievement; leadership development; and work experience opportunities.
- (d) The University maintains an active and positive partnership with the Curtin Student Guild.
- (e) A student transition and retention framework guides the University in enhancing each students' learning experience and performance.
- (f) The University offers students professional and personal development activities designed to increase their career management skills and opportunities, and to enhance their transition from study to work.
- (g) The University offers student mobility programs to foster internationalisation and build strategic partnerships with overseas institutions and education providers.
- (h) Students participating in student mobility programs meet standard Curtin eligibility requirements.
- (i) Services supporting the delivery of Curtin programs offered through partners offshore and onshore include agreed essential elements equivalent to those required at Curtin Bentley, and meet the specified requirements for approval and review.

4. Students

- (a) The University observes all legislation and national codes relevant to the provision of education to students. Curtin students have access to all such laws and codes, University Statutes, rules, by-laws, policies and procedures relating to their rights and responsibilities as a student.
- (b) The University recognises the student's legal rights, including Intellectual Property Rights, and upholds privacy principles.
- (c) The University provides accurate information concerning all relevant aspects of a course, including the curriculum content, learning outcomes, assessment

- and timetables, before the start of each study period.
- (d) Students are provided with consistent policies and efficient procedures for admission, enrolment, progression and completion, and have timely access to advisors and all relevant course information.
 - (e) Marketing of courses is professional and accurate, and maintains the integrity and reputation of the University.

Admission

- (f) Students admitted to the University satisfy prescribed minimum entry requirements.
- (g) Admission policies and processes are informed by progress and completion data for specific cohorts and populations of students, and take into account a student's potential to successfully complete the course requirements. In setting admission policy, due consideration is given to the University's commitments and responsibilities to equity and access.
- (h) Approved RPL is academically defensible and takes into account the student's ability to successfully complete the remaining requirements of the course.

Progression

- (i) Assessment and grading at Curtin are established, managed and deployed on the basis of clearly documented and accessible policies and procedures.
- (j) Assessment in all units
 - i. is appropriate to the learning outcomes;
 - ii. is clearly communicated to students;
 - iii. employs a range of assessment methods;
 - iv. has clearly articulated marking criteria;
 - v. is fair; and
 - vi. ensures students are provided with constructive and timely feedback on their achievement and progress.
- (k) Moderation procedures ensure that student work is assessed according to clearly agreed standards, particularly where there are multiple markers, one marker assesses a large number of papers, a unit is taught on more than one campus, or the assessment is largely subjective.

Completion

- (l) Students receiving an award from Curtin meet the prescribed requirements for the award.
- (m) To receive an award from Curtin, at least one third of the full credit value of the course or one year, whichever is the lesser, is completed at Curtin as a Curtin enrolled student.

- (n) The University ensures the availability of core units and other requirements to enable program completion within allowable timeframes.

5. Standards Related to Specific Cohorts of Students

Higher Degree by Research

- (a) Admission and enrolment of a student into a higher degree by research program occurs only when the applicant meets all relevant admission requirements, and Curtin can provide adequate supervision, infrastructure and other resources and facilities.
- (b) Higher degree by research students attain candidacy when the research program, ethics approval and University safety and health requirements are satisfied, ownership of intellectual property has been defined, and Curtin confirms availability of supervision, infrastructure and other resources and facilities.
- (c) Continuation of a student's enrolment in a higher degree by research program is conditional upon the satisfactory completion of Annual Progress Reports.
- (d) Students undertaking research at Curtin comply with University rules and policies and national codes of practice governing the conduct of research.
- (e) Research involving animals and/or humans is approved by the appropriate research ethics committee, consistent with relevant codes and legislation at the Federal and State level, and University guidelines.
- (f) All research students are offered training that promotes awareness of research-related legislation, guidelines, processes and ethics; encourages mutual cooperation with open exchange of ideas between peers and respect for freedom of expression and inquiry; and maintains a climate in which responsible and ethical behaviour in research is expected.
- (g) Examination of research student theses conforms to University rules and national and University guidelines
- (h) Domestic and international higher degree by research (HDR) scholarships are awarded through a competitive and transparent selection process.
- (i) University guidelines stipulate minimum requirements for supervision; financial support for consumables and fieldwork; and conference attendance (Doctoral students).
- (j) Research students have access to provisions for leave of absence, sick leave, annual leave; and grievance procedures/conflict resolution.

Equity

- (k) Strategies to improve the services provided for disadvantaged students are in place. These include a Student Equity Strategy, a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan; and scholarships related to targeted equity students.
- (l) Academic and administrative support services take into consideration the requirements of all students, including those with special needs, and provide special consideration where academic performance may be adversely affected by illness, disability or other serious cause beyond the student's control.

- (m) Learning and teaching programs for students give due consideration to their cultural needs

Indigenous

- (n) Learning and teaching programs for indigenous students give due consideration to their cultural needs and community responsibilities.
- (o) Culturally-appropriate learning support is provided for Indigenous students

International

- (p) The University observes its obligations to international students required by national codes and Federal/State legislation.
- (q) Curtin has formal agreements with the education (recruitment) agents it engages to formally represent it. The agreements specify the responsibilities of the education agent and Curtin, and the need to comply with the national code, and are reviewed every 2 years.
- (r) Education services delivered through partnership agreements conform to Curtin's requirements with respect to contracts, charts of accounts and quality assurance.
- (s) All new partnership services are approved in accordance with the "Procedures for Assessment of New Programs".
- (t) Contracts for collaborative programs include clauses that refer to annual review arrangements to ensure quality control and compliance with national and international accreditation of degree programs are acquired and maintained.
- (u) Partner reputation and experience are consistent with Curtin's 'Productive Partnership Guidelines'.
- (v) Curtin assists international students to adjust to study and life in Australia, to achieve their learning goals and to achieve satisfactory course progress.

6. Appeals and Grievances

- (a) All Curtin students have access to clearly articulated policies and transparent processes and outcomes for the administration of grievances and appeals.
- (b) The University provides access to staff to discuss program matters, address concerns and complaints; and ensure timely, fair and constructive assessment of work.

7. Continuous Improvement

- (a) Teaching staff demonstrate an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in teaching.
- (b) Student, graduate and employer feedback informs comprehensive course reviews. Student feedback is sought on every coursework unit in every major

study period and informs unit design and practice in the subsequent semester.

- (c) Procedures are implemented at the appropriate level (School, department, course or unit coordinator) to systematically analyse stakeholder and student feedback, and to use this information to improve unit and course quality.
- (d) The University ensures that students have representation on University committees to enable participation in decision-making.

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