



QUALITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

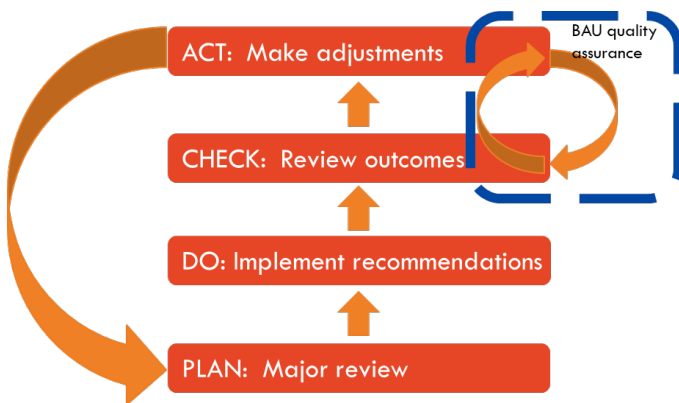
The University of Sydney has two core missions: education and research. The University aims for the highest possible quality in both fields of endeavour. The responsibility for achieving the University’s quality aims for education and research is distributed throughout the University, with the Senate ultimately accountable. The Quality Unit facilitates a coherent and strategic approach to the University’s quality ambitions.

QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The University is an immense and complex institution characterised by high levels of disciplinary diversity and disciplinary specialisation. Quality assurance responsibilities are highly federated, with faculties playing a crucial role in ensuring excellence and the Academic Board and University Executive committees accountable for effective monitoring and reporting to Senate. Within this environment, the quality framework acts as an enabler, providing a lens through which quality assurance may be applied at any level of the organisation, to any activity or unit.

The University’s quality framework formalises widespread practice at the University where regular cycles of quality assurance take place within longer review cycles. Following the Australian/New Zealand Standard model for quality management systems¹, the framework is grounded within a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY QUALITY FRAMEWORK



PLAN: The commencement of a longer review cycle, such as setting the strategy for the University, a major seven-year course review, the re-alignment of a unit’s activities or an annual faculty plan. This stage includes setting goals and metrics; ensuring alignment with the broader environment such as government priorities or the University’s strategy; crafting broad quality improvement aims.

DO: Implement the recommendations or agreed actions arising from the planning stage. Ensure the capacity to measure outcomes is put into effect.

CHECK: Take a pulse check to ensure that implementation is on track. Check the metrics tool to ensure it is capturing meaningful results

ACT: Take remedial action if the check uncovers an unwanted outcome or ineffective metrics.

CHECK/ACT: Having implemented a major quality improvement plan, conduct regular cycles of checking and acting against the initial plan and implementation.

PLAN: Review all aspects of the long cycle, measure against initial goals, assess current environment, capture improvements and re-set from renewed platform.

¹ AS/NZS ISO 9001:2016

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

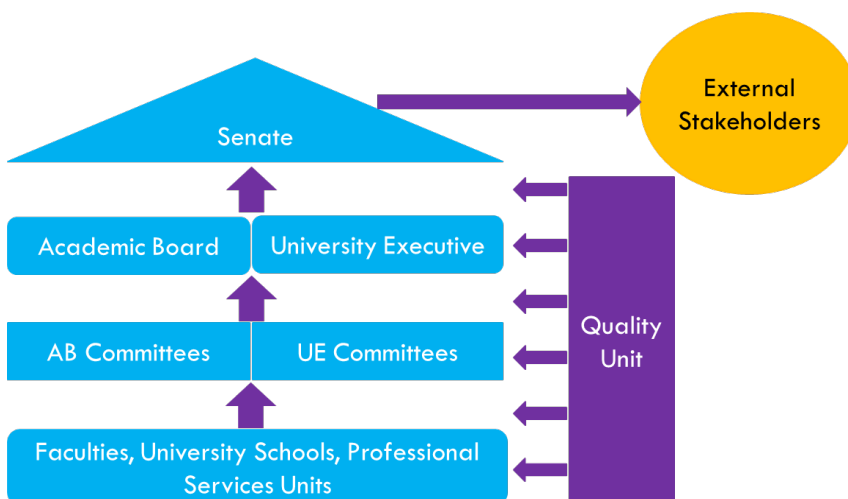
Universities and their researchers and lecturers are the most trusted people and institutions in Australia². The overarching goals of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) are to protect the reputation of the Australian Higher Education sector, and to protect the interests of students. The University promotes a quality agenda which wholeheartedly supports these goals.

The two key quality assurance legislative instruments administered by TEQSA are the [HESF standards](#), which address overall quality, and the [National Code](#), which are the standards addressing quality with respect to international students. The University meets and exceeds these legislated standards, along with the codes of practice and conduct prescribed by peak Australian education and research bodies. The University's governing body, the Senate, is ultimately accountable for ensuring the University meets the quality standards expected by the Australian public. The Senate delegates responsibility for academic standards to the Academic Board.

QUALITY FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE

The quality framework operates within a tripartite governance structure involving the Senate, the Academic Board and the University Executive, which allows the quality agenda to thread through the University and ensures that accountability for quality assurance is supported by appropriate reporting and monitoring. The Quality Unit supports the University to ensure that monitoring and reporting activities, quality initiatives, and data used are appropriate to achieving the highest possible quality outcomes and are aligned to University strategy and goals.

GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE



THE QUALITY UNIT

The Quality Unit ensures that the University's quality aims are embedded in all monitoring and reporting activities and coordinates the network of reviews and quality improvement activities in the University to ensure a holistic and targeted approach to meeting the University's quality objectives.

The Quality Unit supports staff, committees and boards which have responsibility for quality throughout the University to define, measure and report on quality assurance such that the Senate can be confident that the University's quality excellence objectives are met.

The Unit:

- Manages the University-wide relationship interface with TEQSA
- Provides quality-related advice and support to University staff, faculties and committees
- Co-ordinates University-wide quality assurance projects
- Provides comprehensive data and high-level analysis for all student outcome and experience matters
- Provides high-level advice and support to the Academic Quality Committee (AQC)

² [ANUPoll 2019](#)

- Convenes the key University quality working groups: the TEQSA Working Group (TWG) and Quality Community of Practice (QCoP)
- Manages the University's largest-scale student experience and graduate outcomes surveys
- Manages the Academic Board-UE Thematic Review
- Identifies and supports staff responsible for external standards
- Ensures compliance with TEQSA quality requirements
- Integrates quality assurance with the Risk and Audit offices
- Prepares the University for TEQSA re-registration

The Quality Unit sits within the DVC (Education) portfolio.

QUALITY REVIEWS

REVIEW PRINCIPLES

1. Reviews are informed by all stakeholder perspectives, including students, staff and employers. Where possible, the student voice should be incorporated first to inform the remainder of the review.
2. Reviews form part of a quality loop where recommendations are considered by senior stakeholders, implemented and reported on through to completion.
3. Reviews reference relevant external benchmarks and align with internal strategies.
4. Reviews are conducted by experienced panels able to apply a holistic lens.
5. Review decisions are based on the most reliable and recent data available.

REGULAR QUALITY REVIEW PROCESSES

Academic Board/University Executive Thematic Review

Academic Board/University Executive Thematic Reviews are a focussed examination of an issue of critical importance to the University. They are conducted annually across faculties, University schools and, where applicable, portfolios. The panel is chaired alternately by the Provost and the Chair of the Academic Board and comprises senior professional and academic staff from within the University and senior external experts. The thematic approach allows the University to monitor the quality of its operations with regard to strategic priorities and the Higher Education Standards Framework. Themes addressed to date are:

- Student Safety and Wellbeing (2018)
- Student Placements, Internships and Research Projects (2019)
- English Language Pathways and Support (2020)

Course Reviews

Course reviews are a septennial comprehensive examination of a course conducted by the course co-ordinator and reviewed by a panel which includes academic experts from within and without the faculty, and student and employer or professional representatives or other external reference points. The review includes the design and content of each course of study, expected learning outcomes, methods for assessment of those outcomes and the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study. Each review must be informed by benchmarking, disciplinary, professional or employer input or some other external point of reference. These comprehensive reviews are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring of the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.

The Academic Quality Committee reviews all course reviews before commending them to the Academic Board, and monitors the implementation of review recommendations.

Annual Surveys

A series of annual surveys are conducted by the Evaluation and Analytics team within the Quality Unit to understand the student experience and student outcomes. Surveys include:

- Unit of Study Survey (USS)
- Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ)
- Student Experience Survey (SES)
- Graduate Outcomes Survey
- Student Graduate Trajectories Survey (SGTS)
- Barometers ISB-SB Report

High-level initial analysis is conducted by the E&A team and a short summary is sent to senior stakeholders, along with a survey dashboard.

USS reporting

This survey collects feedback on the student experience at the unit of study level. Its content is aligned with items/scales of the national course-level survey, the [SES](#). USS results are made available to the Unit of Study Coordinator, the Dean, the Associate Dean (Education) and other nominees of the Dean via the [USS Results portal](#). Coordinators can give permission to other members of staff (e.g. lecturers/tutors/demonstrators) to view results and historical results are available to current coordinators to help with their teaching planning. Historical qualitative comments access may also be granted to current coordinators with the permission of the applicable Associate Dean (Education). Results are available to students. Coordinators are strongly encouraged to respond to the ratings and comments given by their students. All co-ordinator comments are appended to the results report released to students and they form an important part of the feedback loop.

ERA Quality Reviews

The [Excellence in Research for Australia \(ERA\)](#) review evaluates the quality of research by discipline against the world standard. It identifies research strengths of the University and the sector as a whole. The assessment identifies leaders in research disciplines and emerging fields of research, allowing for benchmarking with global institutions and countries by discipline. Since the initial assessment in 2010, Universities are assessed every three years. The University's results are [here](#)

Engagement and Impact Assessment

In 2018, the University participated in the first national [Engagement and Impact \(EI\)](#) assessment, which examines how universities are translating their research beyond academia, into economic, environmental, cultural, social and other benefits. The University's results are [here](#)

Audits

Audits are conducted in line with the [International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing \(Standards\)](#) and are framed by the [Internal Audit Charter](#) and the [Internal Audit Framework](#).

Internal Audit, a department of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, conducts three types of audit:

- Planned audits
- Unplanned audits
- Insurance portfolio audits

Each November, Internal Audit presents an audit plan for the following year to UE. The aim is to audit each school, faculty and department of the University over a five-year cycle. Complementing planned audits are unplanned audits which are conducted at the request of UE. In 2017 there were 78 unplanned audits and in 2018 there were 60 unplanned audits. Internal Audit may engage an external auditor to conduct an unplanned audit if the expertise required cannot be met in house.

Recommendations are followed up twice a year: an initial desk top exercise followed by a verification exercise. Audit reports are submitted through OGC to the Finance and Audit Committee of the Senate.

Student Consultative Committee

The Student Consultative Committee is one of the key means for including the student voice in University decision-making. It is a forum for the exchange of views on topics across the broad spectrum of student matters. It meets quarterly, is co-chaired by the DVC (Education) and the PVC (Student Life), and reports to University Executive. It has direct student representation from SRC, SUPRA, Cumberland Student Guild, University of Sydney Union, Sydney University Sport and Fitness, Sydney College of the Arts Student Association and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Student Association.

The Student Consultative Committee provides regular consultation between the University and the representative student associations, and is a channel to consult with students on policy matters relating to student experience and welfare.

Quality Conversations

The University complies with the 217 HESF, CRICOS and ELICOS standards. In 2019/20, the Quality Unit refreshed the compliance table and identified all Responsible and Accountable staff. The refresh included an Evidence of Compliance document which incorporates a statement of compliance, reporting and monitoring mechanisms, relevant legislation and policy, and areas for improvement. The areas for improvement form the basis for annual quality conversations with responsible staff, ensuring these external standards are woven into everyday practice within a quality excellence framework.

RESEARCH QUALITY

University of Sydney researchers are among the best in the world. The University is in the world's [top 45 research universities](#). Nationally, Sydney ranks second on the Excellence in Research in Australia (ERA) ratings. Our ERA ratings have improved continuously since 2012 with the number of fields of research rated 5 (*well above world standard*) and 4 (*above world standard*) increasing, both improving from a 3 rating (*at world standard*) which has been concomitantly decreasing.

Our aspiration is to become Australia's leading comprehensive and research-intensive university and to be consistently ranked among the top 50 universities globally.

Aspirational Research Performance Standards represent what is considered to be the highest level of performance for our academic staff, in six categories, aligned broadly and contributing to three of the University Strategic KPIs for research. They are interdependent and mutually reinforcing (therefore with some overlap) and span the areas of quality and reputation, income, collaboration, industry and community engagement and impact, leadership and training.

Descriptors are also being developed for teaching and education performance, which when complete will sit with research performance to establish aspirations for the whole of academic performance.

DATA

Data supporting research quality is provided by [Research Reporting, Analysis, Data and Systems \(RRADS\)](#), research data analysis group within the [Research Portfolio](#). RRADS caters to every part of the data analysis pipeline – from acquisition to insights. Research data on ERA and EI is available [here](#)

QUALITY FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

Clinical Governance Review

The Clinical Governance Review focussed on the systems in place which ensure clinical safety and quality of University health clinics.

The Office of PVC (Research) conducted a gap analysis and University-wide consultation in 2015-16 and documented issues and opportunities in relation to clinics, clinical services and clinical facilities. The key gaps identified were the lack of University governance of and information about clinics, and the lack of mechanisms and structures to support clinics. The cross-functional nature of clinics, which span research, education, external engagement and commercial activities, was identified as a key contributor to these gaps. In 2017 ineffective clinical governance was identified as a top 20 institutional risk.

In response to the risk rating, the Office of PVC (Research) developed a Clinical Governance Framework for University Clinics which outlined the elements required to ensure clinical safety and quality and the organisational structure required for effective clinical governance and the management of critical incidents. The project also developed a draft policy and operating principles for clinics.

The Office of PVC (Research) is in the process of implementing the framework, policy and recommendations with the aim of deploying across the University the simplest, 'fit-for-purpose' clinical governance system for University clinics with the appropriate management, operational and enabling elements to ensure safe, quality clinical care.

EDUCATION QUALITY

Our students meet among the highest entry requirements in Australia, and our [retention and success rates](#) are excellent. In 2018, our student success rate was 92%, and retention has increased steadily since 2013 to 89% in 2017. Both our local and international graduates have exceptional employment outcomes: The University of Sydney has again been named in the [2019 QS Employability Rankings](#) as the number one university in Australia for graduate employability, a position it has now held for four years running. The University's graduates are the fifth most sought after in the world.

Our aspiration is to deliver an outstanding student experience, one that results in students being and feeling connected to the University community, fully engaged in learning and achieving excellent educational outcomes.

The strategic outcomes the University wants to achieve by 2020 are captured by the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Progress of initiatives designed to achieve these outcomes is monitored via the Strategic Initiative Indicators (SIIs). The Evaluation and Analytics team reports on Education KPIs and SIIs annually.

The definitions of the Education KPIs, along with the University's performance against agreed measures, can be found in the full report [here](#).

Education KPIs: 2015 – 2018 performance and 2019 – 2020 targets

Key Performance Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Target	Target
KPI-E1: Unit of study experience	3.97	4.03	4.06	4.08	4.12	4.20
KPI-E2: Educational experience	71.67 28 th	73.76 26 th	73.30 23 rd	71.76 30 th	74.3 20 th	74.9 18 th
KPI-E3: HDR Experience	4.20 13 th	4.05 16 th	4.10 =7 th	4.04 =15 th	4.10 5 th	4.20 4 th
KPI-E4: Graduate outcomes	- -	73.6 =6 th	72.2 5 th	74.7 2 nd	- 4 th	- 3 rd
KPI-E5: Student retention^A	88.00 1 st	87.96 3 rd	87.76 3 rd	89.06 N/A	88.2 3 rd	88.6 2 nd
KPI-E6: Student support	58.99 39 th	60.58 39 th	61.17 39 th	59.14 39 th	64.0 34 th	70.0 24 th
KPI-E7: Learning resources	78.06 38 th	82.65 34 th	79.46 36 th	80.47 28 th	81.3 33 rd	82.5 26 th
KPI-E8: PhD 4-year completion rate^{AA}	33.97	29.51	27.76 ⁺	25.47 ⁺⁺	30.0	35.0

Notes.

^{N/A} Comparative retention results are not yet available.

^A Go8 ranking, as UA benchmarking data are not available. All other rankings are UA, out of 39 universities.

^{AA} There are currently no reliable comparisons for PhD 4-year completion rate. There may be in the years to come as reporting by universities becomes more standardized as a result of recent changes in requirements.

⁺ This figure has been corrected by IAP. It was previously incorrectly calculated and reported as 33.30.

⁺⁺ This figure has been updated as the underlying 2018 completions data has been updated in IAP systems since preliminary figures were reported at Senate and other senior committees earlier in the year.

The definitions of the Education SIIs, along with target setting methodology and performance, can be found in the full report [here](#).

Education SIs: 2017 performance and targets to 2020

Strategic Area	Strategic Initiative Indicator	Result 2016	Performance 2017	Target 2017	Target 2017 met?	Target 2018	Target 2019	Target 2020
PhD	PhD: PhD 4-Year Submission Rate	-	55.31	N/A	N/A	57.54	59.67	61.68
	PhD: PhD 4-Year Completion Rate	-	27.76	N/A	N/A	31.37	34.80	38.06
	Time to PhD Discontinuation	-	1.33	N/A	N/A	1.26	1.20	1.14
Graduate Qualities	Sydney Graduate Qualities: SES	56%	56%	58%	No	57%	58%	62%
	Sydney Graduate Qualities: GOS	-	3.89	N/A	N/A	3.91	3.94	4.05
Teaching Experience	Teaching Experience	62%	Biennial	Biennial	Biennial	66%	Biennial	69%
Professional Learning	Principles and Practice (P&P) program completions	160	204	183	Yes	205	228	250
	Graduate Certificate (Higher Education) completions	34	33	38	No	42	46	50
	New Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships awarded	1	24	20	Yes	39	58	75
Experiential Learning	Percentage of Undergraduate Students Undertaking Experiential Learning	-	61.91%	N/A	N/A	50%	75%	100%
	Number of Enrolments in Undergraduate Experiential Learning Units of Study	-	20,446	N/A	N/A	22,491	24,740	27,214

The University benchmarks against Go8 and UA universities for all national student experience and outcomes surveys, and through the QVS which measures our performance in 17 discipline areas. We benchmark internationally through the ISB survey, and C-sight forums provide granular insights into the student experience.

DATA

Data supporting education quality is provided by the Evaluation and Analytics (E&A) team within the Quality Unit in the [Education Portfolio](#). The E&A team supports the decision-making of senior stakeholders in the University with strategic data analysis of student-evaluation-related data. The current survey reports are available [here](#).

QUALITY FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

Student Experience Program

Our performance on the national surveys is driving the **Student Experience Program**, a \$46m initiative to improve our student experience and outcomes.

The Student Experience Program is a suite of projects with a three-year implementation phase which aims to deliver an outstanding student experience, one that results in **students being and feeling connected** to the University community, **fully engaged in learning** and **achieving excellent educational outcomes**. The University aims to be an exemplary leading institution for student experience, as measured by **national benchmarking surveys**, by 2025.

The Program is underpinned by the **Student Experience Strategy**, which evolved from the work of the 2017 International Student Experience Taskforce, and the work of the 2018 Transition, Advising and Careers Steering Group where more than 40 senior academic and professional staff from across the University came together to identify challenges and make recommendations. The strategy represents the culmination of significant thinking and research by senior academics and professionals across the University.

The University community was consulted extensively throughout the Program development phase and the Program continues to engage the broader University community to streamline information gathering and ensure dependencies are managed. The Program has also ensured significant student engagement and consultation: in the first nine months of development over 9000 students were engaged in co-design activities.

A set of core program design principles ensure: that students are placed at the centre; that the Program is strategy- and outcomes-focused; and that actions and decisions are evidence-based. Existing key performance indicators for education and the student experience are used as a benchmark of success, and additional indicators have been developed. The University will know that it has achieved its vision for an outstanding student experience when these measures demonstrate that the University is among the leading universities within Australia for the quality of its educational experience and student life.

The Student Experience Program is overseen by the Education Program Control Board, with responsibility for alignment with strategic direction and program decisions, and is monitored by three Student Experience Steering Committees. Working Groups and Advisory Groups track deliverables, issues, risks and inter-dependencies, and provide University-wide input and advice.

Outcomes

- Engaging, supportive and intellectually stimulating learning experiences
- A meaningful and diverse student life that encourages connections and sense of belonging
- Integrated and responsive support for students at key moments of transition and choice
- Improved access to essential supports embedding a culture of proactivity
- Building environments enabling accessible and consistent information and dialogue with students

Targets and measures

- The overall measurement of the program will be to place the University on a par nationally for student experience with comparable universities (according to national benchmarking surveys)
- Successful transition of piloted initiatives to everyday business by the end of 2021
- Measured improvement on SES quality of entire educational experience (currently at 75% for 2017) to meet national average by 2021
- An increase in retention of students of up to 1% by 2024. Baseline is 2017
- Systematic and consistent approach to monitoring and reporting the student experience through agreed reporting framework and scorecard
- Implementation of the Monitoring & Reporting framework and development of the Benefits Realisation plan will further inform and define measurement of improvement in student experience across the program

INSTITUTIONAL KPIS

Theme	Performance area	Key indicators	Quality target
Excellence	Research performance	CAT1-4 research; ERA; social impact	First in Australia
	Educational experience	Student satisfaction; student retention and progression	Recognised as the best in Australia
	Graduate outcomes	Percentage employed or undertaking further study; graduate qualities assessment	
	Reputation	Rankings - THE; ARWU; QS; US News	First in Australia
	Student demand	Load by faculty in the new curriculum	NSW market share for 90+ ATAR
Engagement	External partnerships	Research engagement activity; quality of global partnerships (alignment with research and education strategies); student mobility	Market share of national research engagement activity and funding; 50 percent student mobility; 30 preferred partnerships by 2020
	Staff culture	Annual culture survey, with year-on-year improvement	
Simplification	Sustainable and streamlined operations	Measurable improvement in service quality and efficiency	

The University of Sydney 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan