

Academic Quality Assurance Framework

| Policy Category | Policy/guideline/procedure/rules | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Review | 3 years from date of Approval | | |
| Policy Code | AP008 | | |
| Contacts | policy@top.edu.au | | |
| Version | Approval Authority | Approval Date | Commencement Date |
| 2017.08 | Academic Board | 29 August 2017 | 29 August 2017 |

1. PURPOSE

Academic quality assurance is a vital part of Top Education Institute's (TOP's) strategic plan and is built into TOP's general business planning and reporting processes. As an assurance of learning system, TOP's academic quality assurance maintains a high standard of academic integrity and continuously improves the quality of its teaching and learning. This framework provides an overview of the processes that ensure academic quality assurance for TOP. An essential element to quality assurance processes is TOP's adherence to all legislative requirements including the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011, Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 and Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, TOP Council delegates implementation of academic quality assurance to the Academic Board and its subcommittees.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of TOP's governing bodies, management, and all academic and administrative staff, including full-time and sessional staff.

3. DEFINITIONS

Benchmarking is the process of comparing processes and performances with comparable educational institutions. It enables valid and relevant comparisons and provides an external reference point for the achievement of educational standards.

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students is a set of nationally consistent standards that govern the protection of international students and delivery of courses to those students by providers registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The National Code is established under *the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)*

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education.

The HES Framework (2015) are the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1. The Promotion of Free Intellectual Enquiry

TOP's Board of Directors has approved TOP's Mission Statement. This statement is published in all relevant documentation and encourages TOP's students to "exercise individual freedom in intellectual thought and curiosity" thus promoting free inquiry and research among its staff and students as stated in the Constitution of Governance.

4.2. Quality learning and teaching

TOP's courses and units are designed and developed by senior academics with previous senior-level experience and appointments in Australian universities, supported by TOP's academic staff members, under the supervision of the respective Deans. Refer to the Academic Course and Unit development policy for specific information.

The courses are reviewed regularly (or new courses are developed) to comply with all regulatory and quality standards and in line with sector expectations. Benchmarking against other like education providers, including Australian and overseas universities, ensures that reviews of academic standards are evidence-based analyses. Refer to the Course and Unit Review policy for specific information.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

5.1. Roles and responsibilities

Ensuring compliance with all regulatory requirements is a priority for TOP. TOP's governance bodies and senior positions at each school are responsible for quality assurance and compliance. As part of ongoing educative and monitoring processes, TOP's staff are briefed on regulatory and legislative environments. All staff involved in the delivery and/or support of teaching and learning are responsible for ensuring the quality of the student education experience.

5.1.1 Council

The Council is the supreme corporate governing body of the Institute, legally delegated by the Group to act on its behalf in accordance with this Constitution in governing the Institute. Without intending to limit this general role the Council exercises governance oversight of and is accountable for all of the Institute's operations in or from Australia, including accountability for the award of higher education qualifications, for continuing to meet the requirements of the HES Framework (2015) and for the Institute's representation of itself. To ensure the widest possible interest of the Institute in achieving its objectives, external Members of the Council shall be persons drawn from a broad range of backgrounds including academia, higher education management, law, finance, public sector governance and other relevant business areas. The Council shall meet four times a year in ordinary sessions and at such other times as may be necessary.

5.1.2 Academic Board

The functions of the Academic Board are specified in TOP's Constitution, the functions and responsibilities of the Board are to uphold the academic quality standards and academic integrity of higher education provided by the Institute and that these are in line with the HESF Framework (2015), National Code and other professional accreditation bodies. The Board includes external experts in various fields of academia to ensure the widest possible interest of TOP in achieving its academic objectives, and external experts who have held previous senior leadership positions in leading Australian universities.

The Academic Board meets six times a year, and at any other time that it may be required, and reports to the Council at every Council meeting.

5.1.3 Course Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC is delegated by Academic Board to assist the Board in course development and

accreditation applications, assess and review existing courses and suggest improvements in respect of academic quality and standing through benchmarking with the similar programs in the Australian higher education sector and other means available to it. The Committee shall submit its recommendations on new course programs to the Board for approval.

A review of every course will be initiated by the Academic Board and will be conducted by the Course Advisory Committee no less than every four years. An evaluation of each unit will be conducted by teaching staff no less than every two years. CAC shall implement a process of review that requires external benchmarking; a data driven process using student data; and the use of internal and independent external review experts.

5.1.4 Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC)

The TLC terms of reference are set out in TOP's Constitution. Under the terms, the TLC has responsibility for developing the Teaching & Learning Plan through benchmarking with similar programs in the Australian higher education sector, and to implement, monitor and review the Plan to ensure quality assurance of courses (including course structure and coherence), assessment and examination policies, processes for course management, learning support, student progress and student transition into courses and careers. To fulfil its quality assurance function, the TLC:

- Develops appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures of performance of teaching and learning (including student progression), which is benchmarked against international best practice;
- Implements quality assurance measures of academic programs and associated student support programs (including appropriate assessment, moderation of assessment, unit outlines and unit learning material);
- Reviews and evaluates quality in teaching and learning of all award courses (including and associated student support services and programs);
- Monitors the quality and effectiveness of programs designed to facilitate the transition of students into undergraduate and postgraduate courses and from courses into careers; and
- Advises and liaises with the Deans on all matters related to student and administrative support programs and services for teaching and learning.

5.1.5 Academic Management

Academic Management team implements the policies approved by the Academic Board. The Deputy Principal (Academic) and Deans are responsible for:

- fostering excellence in teaching & learning;
- the general direction of curriculum planning & development;
- the general direction of the research & outreach efforts;
- the promotion of academic freedom & intellectual enquiry; and
- the general direction of academic support programs & services.

The Deans and the Deputy Principal (Academic) has management responsibilities in relation to policy implementation and report to the Academic Board.

5.1.6 Academic Staff

TOP acknowledges the importance of having academic staff who are appropriately qualified at the requisite level of academic merit and/or professional experience to ensure that students are given the highest quality of teaching to facilitate their learning. TOP's Academic Qualifications and Equivalent Professional Experience Policy outline the criteria for TOP to determine the equivalence of professional experience to formal academic qualifications in line with AQF Standards.

5.2 Monitoring and reporting

Each school dean should provide regular report to the Academic Board and its subcommittee on the implementation quality assurance. Reports will provide an evidence for the Academic Board and its subcommittee to identify quality enhancement initiatives. Reports should address:

- The overall quality of the course relevant to a professional discipline and standard;
- The educational aims and learning outcomes of the course and whether these remain appropriate;
- Student data in terms of student admission, progression, completion, student satisfaction survey result and graduate outcome;
- Student feedback;
- The course and whether it is based on current knowledge and research and effective learning strategies;
and
- adequacy of staff profile, teaching and learning space, learning resources and support.

5.3 Support

5.3.1 Workforce plan

TOP has a three-year workplace plan in relation to the organisation's human resource strategy. It is based on TOP's current operating context, its future plans to grow the student profile and an assessment of required capabilities to meet the demands of the existing and future student profile. TOP is committed to employing highly credentialed and academically qualified lecturers. The workforce plan specifies the aim of hiring academics with PhDs, and the qualifications and teaching experience equivalent to academics at the leading Australian universities. TOP has allocated financial and other resources to support scholarship activities for any employed teaching/academic staff.

5.3.2 Facilities Support

TOP is committed to providing facilities that support the provision of quality education for all students. The Facilities Policy and Procedure provides details on ensuring high standard infrastructure for student learning; provisions for catering for students with special needs; and procedures for ensuring the maintenance of a safe and healthy environment. In line with TOP's 'Smart Campus' concept, a multi-format collection supports teaching, learning and research. The Library Collection Development Policy details the processes in place that assure the library's collection responds to changes and growth of TOP's courses. The librarian communicates and coordinates with TOP academic staff, and also benchmarks resources against those of other universities. In addition to specific resources maintained at TOP, TOP reimburse students and staff with community access to library resources at the University of Sydney.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- i. Academic Course and Unit Development Policy
- ii. Academic Integrity Policy
- iii. Academic Qualifications and Equivalent Professional Experience Policy
- iv. Assessment Policy and Procedure (Coursework)
- v. Course and Unit Review Policy and Procedure
- vi. Facilities Policy and Procedure
- vii. Library Collection Development Policy
- viii. Moderation Policy and Procedure
- ix. Staff Recruitment, Review and Promotion Policy
- x. Professional & Academic Staff Performance Review Policy and Procedures
- xi. Workforce Plan

7. VERSION CONTROL

| Historical Version | Approved by | Approval Date |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 2017.08 | Academic Board | 29 August 2017 |
| 2017.05 | Principal | 26 May 2017 |
| 2013.12 | Principal/Academic Board | 19 December 2013 |
| 2009.03 | Principal/Academic Board | 03 March 2009 |