

Newsletter September 2008

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Welcome

La Trobe University is committed to Responsibility, Relevance, Critical inquiry, Integrity, Participation and Excellence – key values articulated in the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan.

Part of the plan ensuring that we meet our commitment to these values is to promote an environment of continuous improvement at the University.

This newsletter is intended to inform members of the University about the forthcoming AUQA audit and preparations. The Quality homepage at www.latrobe.edu.au/quality is a source of further information.

Dr Julie Jackson
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Enhancement)

Preparations for the AUQA Cycle 2 Audit

The University is preparing to recognise our achievements and to reflect on areas where improvements may be required in next year's Quality Audit, to be undertaken by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in September 2009.

The Audit will require us to focus on our strategic objectives, to measure our performance against our own and relevant external benchmarks and to improve further on our practices.

La Trobe University's performance portfolio for the AUQA Cycle 2 audit, which outlines what the University is aiming to achieve, its strategies and its performance results, is to be submitted to AUQA on June 16 2009.

The audit visit will then take place on 21-24 September 2009. There will also be visits to offshore locations and possibly a regional campus, which will take place before the September audit visit.

A central Academic Quality Steering Group, formed to assist with preparations for the audit, includes academic representatives from each faculty, the library, the international office and student representatives.

In addition, an AUQA Audit Steering group has been formed, which includes representatives of the senior executive with portfolio responsibilities in the areas to be audited, to ensure appropriate responses and information are included in the University's portfolio.

Themes and Focus

Cycle 2 audits focus on themes rather than a comprehensive review of all University activities. Following a risk assessment by the University and AUQA, the selected themes for La Trobe are 'Research and Research Training' and 'Internationalisation'.

Cycle 1 audits focussed on 'fitness for purpose' where institutions were audited against their strategic plans. Cycle 2 audits will additionally focus on 'fitness of purpose' and outcome standards, which will require increased benchmarking against external reference points.

As part of this external referencing, the University analysed its compliance with the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. We submitted this analysis to AUQA in May 2008 and will be fully compliant in time for the audit.

Quality Enhancement Framework

With a new strategic plan, it will be difficult for us to demonstrate the outcomes or results of new initiatives within the relevant time frame. However, we can demonstrate improvements through our responses to the last AUQA audit and also through the development of new initiatives in response to historic data.

We can also demonstrate that we have in place a quality enhancement framework to support a quality improvement cycle.

Organisational and Committee Structure

The announcement of the senior management structure by the Vice-Chancellor completes the identification of accountabilities and responsibilities for University activities. Reviews of Council and Academic Board Committees are almost complete.

Supporting Policy Framework

The policy framework is in place, having been approved by Council at its August meeting. The framework encompasses both academic and administrative policies. Secretariat has taken the responsibility for developing the policy library and website. Work is underway to populate the policy framework, transferring existing policies into the new templates, identifying policy gaps and developing new policies to support the University Strategic Plan. These include policies related to review cycles and performance management. Workshops on policy writing for the new templates are being run from the Office of the PVC (QE).

Planning and Review Cycles

The Phillips KPA consultants have been working on Budget and Planning cycles. A proposed review cycle and implementation timelines for annual operational monitoring and five yearly strategic reviews of organisational units, aligned to the budget and planning cycles, was approved by the Senior Executive Group on August 18.

*Key Elements of the
Quality Enhancement
Framework:*

*Organisational and
Committee Structure*

*Supporting Policy
Framework*

*Planning and Review
Cycles*

The Performance Portfolio

The portfolio, which is constrained to 20,000 words, will have three chapters:

Chapter 1 – Progress on recommendations and affirmations from the Cycle 1 audit and any changes to quality systems. La Trobe had eleven affirmations and fifteen recommendations to which we need to provide responses.

Chapter 2 – Research and Research Training

Chapter 3 – Internationalisation

To properly report on our objectives and achievements in the themes covered in Chapters 2 and 3, it is critical that we have high level plans that sit under the University Strategic Plan, detailing our approach and planned actions. These are under development by members of the Senior Executive.

Self review

A meaningful self review is cast in the light of operational plans and targets in alignment with high level University plans, and also compliance with University policy and procedures. Once the high level plans are in place and the University policy framework is more fully populated and accessible to members of the University, we will work towards a self review exercise against the two chosen themes in preparation for the 2009 audit. This is likely to take place in early 2009.

Further information

Information on progress towards the affirmations and recommendations will be placed on the quality website www.latrobe.edu.au/quality as will the portfolio as it develops. Also to be found on this website are links to the last audit Performance Portfolio, the last Audit Report, our 2006 progress report, as well as a number of Powerpoint presentations containing detailed information about the audit.

*Performance Portfolio
Chapters:
Progress since Cycle 1
Research & Research
Training
Internationalisation*

AUQA Audit Timeline

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| Trial audit/external institutional review | March – April 2009 |
| Prepare final Performance Portfolio | April – May 2009 |
| Submission of Performance Portfolio (including Supporting Documentation) | 16 June 2009 |
| Preparatory visit by AUQA panel chair and AUQA member | July or August 2009 |
| Offshore Visit (if required) | TBA |
| Regional Visit (if required) | TBA |
| Audit visit University Community to participate | 21 to 24 Sept 2009 |
| AUQA report published | Dec 2009 – Feb 2010 |
| University response - 'action plan' | Immediately following report publication |
| Implementation of action plan | Immediately after action plan outlined |
| Progress report on action plan | 12 months after audit report released |