

# Program Review - Procedures

These procedures specify requirements and processes associated with external reviews of coursework and higher degree by research programs as required under the Program Accreditation and Course Approval - Governing Policy and the Higher Degree by Research Accreditation – Academic Policy respectively, and should be read in association with those policies.

## Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness:

**Program Coordinator:** refers to the nominated Program Coordinator for coursework programs, and to the Head of School in the absence of a specific Program Coordinator for a higher degree by research at the time of review.

**Program cluster** means programs in a cognate discipline that are grouped for the purposes of a program review.

**Note:** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is appointed as Chairperson of the Academic Board.

## 1. Program review scheduling and preparation (terms of reference and panel selection)

1.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approves the program review cycle developed by the Quality Office in consultation with the Heads of School. An 'out of cycle' program review may be undertaken with the approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

1.2 Deferment of a program review to another cycle or cluster is subject to the written approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Grounds for deferment include:

- when a program has recently been reviewed in an 'out of cycle' process; or
- a request for exemption is made by a Head of School.

1.3 The Quality Office publishes the program review schedule annually and at least 6 months prior to the following year.

1.4 The Head of School will appoint a Review Officer at least 6 months prior to the proposed site visit review to lead the review process and facilitate the production of the Review Portfolio. The Review Officer is generally the Program Coordinator.

1.5 The Quality Office provides:

- a Review Support Officer to manage the review process;
- support, training and advice on program review processes; and
- secretariat services to the Review Panel during the site visit.

1.6 The Head of School will seek approval of any variation to the standard terms of reference from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at least six months prior to the proposed site visit.

1.7 The Head of School will nominate a short-list of potential members for the Review Panel and seek approval for appointment from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at least six months prior to the proposed site visit.

1.8 Selection of panel members is based on their experience, expertise and impartiality. The Review Panel generally comprises three representatives, external to the University, and normally includes the following:

- a chairperson who currently occupies or has recently occupied;
  - for coursework programs - a professorial level position in another Australian university in a discipline or field of education pertinent to the programs to be reviewed; or

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

FIRST APPROVED

11 November 2013

LAST AMENDED

23 October 2020

REVIEW DATE

28 June 2024

STATUS

Active

- for higher degree by research programs – a Dean of Graduate Research Studies position or equivalent professorial level position in graduate research studies, and who has experience in undertaking program reviews or is a Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) registered expert.
- experienced senior academics from another university in a discipline or field of education pertinent to the programs to be reviewed; and
- where appropriate, a member drawn from a relevant industry or professional association or from amongst the employers of graduates from the programs to be reviewed, and who is neither a past nor current employee of the University.

The composition or number of panel membership can be varied with the written approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

1.9 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) appoints the Chairperson and panel members on advice from the Head of School and the Quality Office.

1.10 The Chairperson and members of the Review Panel are:

- required to enter into an agreement to protect university intellectual property and maintain the confidentiality of any corporate or personal information made known to them during the review process; and
- to be reimbursed for all out-of-pocket expenses, and may receive an honorarium for their contribution to the review.

## 2. Review portfolio preparation

2.1 The Review Officer, on behalf of the Head of School, is responsible for the production of the Review Portfolio within a six month time frame. The process should conform to guidelines and be collegial and consultative. It should engage all staff associated with the management and delivery of the cluster of programs in a process of critical reflection and include key stakeholder perceptions.

2.2 Where appropriate, in addressing the terms of reference for the review in the Review Portfolio, the Review Officer should draw on available information and data from a range of program related activities, including but not limited to, the Annual Program Monitoring process, benchmarking and any other peer review process undertaken.

2.3 Where a program is offered at more than one campus, including a third-party managed campus:

- The School must liaise with relevant staff from all campuses as part of its portfolio preparation process; and
- The review portfolio must address the achievement of learning outcomes for each applicable campus and study mode, including:
  - data for progression rates, attrition rates and completion times and rates;
  - consistency of approach in the provision of student support services;
  - consistency of approach in program design and equivalence of delivery; and
  - any specific issues or challenges related to campus or study mode and action taken to address these.

2.4 For programs that are professionally accredited, program reviews will be scheduled to allow for documentation, and actions taken in response to review report recommendations, to be utilised in preparation for professional accreditation submissions.

2.5 The final draft of the Review Portfolio must be submitted to the Review Support Officer no later than six weeks prior to the site visit.

2.6 The Review Support Officer will provide feedback as required to facilitate finalisation of the Review Portfolio.

2.7 The final Review Portfolio must be approved by the Head of School and submitted to the Review Support Officer no later than four weeks prior to the site visit, for distribution to panel members.

2.8 The Review Support Officer announces the program review to the University community. A call for confidential submissions to the review panel is also made, including all current students enrolled in the program and relevant external stakeholders specified by the Head of School.

2.9 All submissions are confidential to the review panel members and the Review Support Officer and are disposed of appropriately upon receipt of the final review report.

## 3. Panel site visit

3.1 Where a program is offered at more than one campus, including a third-party managed campus:

- To minimise the burden placed on the panel, the site visit should not be held at more than one campus unless this is requested by the panel and agreed to by the relevant School;
- Interviews with stakeholders at remote locations should be facilitated using communications technology - such as videoconference, teleconference or skype, as preferred and available; and
- Where appropriate, separate interview sessions should be held for students and staff based at remote campuses.

3.2 The site visit schedule will be forwarded to the Review Support Officer with the draft Review Portfolio. The site visit schedule will then be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for consideration and approval.

3.3 The Review Panel usually convene for no more than three days and three nights during a site visit. Generally, an entry interview will be held involving the Review Panel and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

3.4 During the site visit the Review Panel:

- will interview a representative sample of persons with a stake in the programs under review; and
- may inspect the physical teaching and facilities and resources provided to support the programs under review.

3.5 At the end of the visit the Review Panel will present their preliminary findings to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Head of School.

3.6 Where it is not feasible to conduct an on-campus site visit, the Quality Office will provide options for Schools and panel members to consider in order to facilitate progress with the review.

## 4. Panel review report

4.1 The Review Panel submits a report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on its findings in relation to each of the terms of reference, including recommendations, by no later than six weeks after conclusion of the site visit. The panel will recommend if the program should continue to be offered in its present form, if the program should continue to be offered only on condition that recommendations for actions are implemented, or that the program should be discontinued.

4.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approves the Review Report for release to the School for its action and the Review Support Officer publishes the review report on MyUniSC and advises the University community of its availability.

4.3 The Review Support Officer makes the Review Report available to all students enrolled in the program.

## 5. Program Review Response and Action Plan

5.1 Within eight weeks of receiving the Review Panel Report, a Program Review Response and Action Plan must be developed for submission to Academic Board.

5.2 The Head of School has responsibility for consulting with the relevant stakeholders to consider the findings and recommendations and develop the Action Plan. In the case of Higher Degrees by Research programs, consultation will include the Research Degrees Committee.

5.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approves submission of the Review Report and the Program Review Response and Action Plan for submission to the next scheduled meeting of the Program and Course Committee for consideration and noting, and to Academic Board for its consideration and approval.

5.4 The Academic Board considers the Review Report, Program Review Response and Action Plan from the School, and any associated proposals for continued accreditation or discontinuation and decides whether to:

- approve the Program Review Response and Action Plan or specify changes required to be made;
- approve continued accreditation of one or more of the programs for a further seven years subject to the completion of the Action Plan; and
- approve the initiation of the process for discontinuation of one or more of the programs from a specified date.

5.5 Proposals for program amendments or discontinuations resulting from the program review process must be submitted in accordance with the Program Accreditation and Course Approval - Governing Policy and procedures.

## 6. Reporting on outcomes

6.1 The Head of School is to ensure that copies of the Review Report and the Program Review Response and Action Plan are to be forwarded to the relevant Committees for noting.

6.2 It is expected that the Action Plan actions will be completed within a two year time frame. Every six months the Review Officer, in consultation with the Head of School and Program Coordinator(s), reviews the Action Plan and writes a Progress Report to be endorsed by the Head of School offering the reviewed programs.

6.3 The fourth and final Progress Report should outline how any outstanding actions will be actioned or transferred into operational planning.

6.4. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approves submission of the Progress Report to Academic Board for its consideration and approval.

6.5 The Quality Office is responsible for maintaining a schedule for Program Reviews, Program Review Response and Action Plans, and Progress Reports.

6.6 The Quality Office will publish the Review Response and Action Plan, and Progress Reports on MyUniSC.

## 7. Records and information management

7.1 At the commencement of a program review the Quality Office will create a discrete program review file (linked to the program/s file). The Quality Office will ensure that key documentation in relation to the program review is captured on the file in the approved records management system, in accordance with the University's Information Management Framework - Governing Policy.

## 8. Review support material

Program review guidelines, handbooks and templates developed by the Quality Office to assist in the review process can be found on MyUniSC (staff login required).

## Appendix A – Standard Terms of Reference – Review of Coursework Programs

### REVIEW OF THE <Insert name of cluster> PROGRAMS

The School of <Insert name> offers the following program/s:

Xxxx

Xxxx

xxxx

In line with the University's commitment to ongoing quality assurance and quality improvement, and also to monitor compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework 2015, the review panel is asked to consider, evaluate and make recommendations on each program, with specific reference to the following criteria. The review panel is also asked to make recommendations on the accreditation status of each program.

#### 1. Strategic Alignment

i. The program aligns with the goals and imperatives of the University's Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

#### 2. Program Design

i. The curriculum is coherent and represents the most current knowledge and scholarship, skills, values and practices of the discipline.

ii. The curriculum supports students to achieve the program's learning outcomes, regardless of place of study or mode of delivery.

iii. There is a systematic, regular process for updating the curriculum.

iv. The curriculum aligns with the University's curriculum design principles.

#### 3. Learning and Teaching

i. The learning and teaching activities promote and support students in a progressive and coherent achievement of the expected learning outcomes for the program.

ii. Assessment practices in the program are appropriate and align with the program learning outcomes.

iii. The overall quality of learning, teaching and assessment in the program reflect best practice.

iv. Quality engaged learning and assessment opportunities are provided, including Work-Integrated Learning (WIL).

#### 4. Program Outcomes

i. Graduates of the program are suitably prepared for entry into the workforce, career progression or for postgraduate opportunities.

ii. The program's performance and learning outcomes are regularly reviewed against discipline standards and similar programs at other Australian universities via external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

#### 5. Student Support

i. Appropriate orientation into the program is provided for domestic and international students.

ii. Effective processes for identification and support of at-risk students are in place.

iii. Academic staff are appropriately available for students seeking academic assistance.

#### 6. Feedback

i. The observations and experiences of students, graduates and external stakeholders are sought and acted upon.

## 7. Student Success

- i. The admission criteria and procedures for entry into the program are appropriate, including the processes for granting credit.
- ii. The overall trends in retention, progression and graduation rates for students in the program are in line with University goals.

## 8. Staffing

- i. The qualifications, experience, levels of appointment, and administrative and technical support of academic staff are appropriate, in terms of their capability to deliver the program now and in the context of possible future developments.
- ii. Academic staff are appropriately and sufficiently engaged in research and professional development activities.

## 9. Learning resources

- i. The provision of learning support resources (library, laboratory facilities, studios, software, learning management system, technology) is appropriate and adequate.

## 10. Viability

- i. The program is viable in the short and long term.

The review panel will provide a written report to the University within six weeks of the site visit. Among other things the panel will recommend if each program should continue to be offered in its present form, should be offered on condition that specified changes are made, or should be discontinued.

## Appendix B – Standard Terms of Reference – Review of HDR Programs

### REVIEW OF HIGHER DEGREE PROGRAMS

The <Insert School(s) name> offer(s) the following higher degree by research program/s:

Xxxx

Xxxx

xxxx

In line with the University's commitment to ongoing quality assurance and quality improvement, and also to monitor compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework 2015, with particular focus on those related to research training, the review panel is asked to consider, evaluate and make recommendations on each program, with specific reference to the following criteria. The review panel is also asked to make recommendations on the accreditation status of each program.

#### 1. Strategic Alignment

- The program aligns with the goals and imperatives of the University's Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

#### 2. Program Design

- The program supports the students to achieve the appropriate AQF requirements (level 9 or 10) and any program learning outcomes, regardless of the place of study or mode of delivery.
- Assessment practices for any coursework components are appropriate and align with the program learning outcomes.
- Quality engaged learning opportunities are provided, including relevant industry placements and engagement.

#### 3. Examination

- The Examiners' ratings and comments on theses submitted indicate that the research undertaken by students in the program is original and of an appropriate quality.
- The percentage of re-submissions required are within sector norms.

#### 4. Program outcomes

- Graduates embody the most current knowledge and scholarship, research skills, values and practices of the discipline.
- Graduates are suitably prepared for entry into the workforce, career progression or for further research opportunities.

#### 5. Student support

- Appropriate orientation to the University and induction as a research higher degree student are provided for domestic and international students.
- Appropriate and sufficient ongoing training is provided for the development of research skills.
- Students in the program are supported by an appropriate research culture and environment of research activity.

[usc.edu.au/policy](http://usc.edu.au/policy)

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- Students in the program receive consistent, quality supervision throughout their candidature.
- Supervisors are appropriately available for students seeking academic assistance.
- Effective mechanisms for identification and support of at-risk students are in place.
- Appropriate processes are available for the resolution of disputes.
- There are appropriate processes in place for the management of research integrity, research data and intellectual property.

#### 6. Feedback

- The observations and experiences of candidates, graduates and external stakeholders are sought and acted upon.

#### 7. Student success

- The admission criteria and procedures for entry into the program are appropriate.
- The confirmation of candidature process is robust and ensures that students are well prepared to complete their program.
- The overall trends in retention, progression and completion times/rates are in line with sector norms.

#### 8. Supervisors

- Supervisors meet the requirements for eligibility to supervise HDR students.
- Supervisors are appropriately and sufficiently engaged in research and professional development activities.
- Supervisors are appropriately inducted into their role.
- Workload allocation for supervision is in line with University guidelines.

#### 9. Research Support Resources

- The provision of research support resources (office space, IT equipment, library, laboratory facilities, studios, software, technology, financial resources) is appropriate and adequate.

#### 10. Viability

- The program is viable in the short and long term, taking into consideration the availability of alternative programs elsewhere in Queensland and Australia, and likely future developments in the field.

The review panel will provide a written report to the University within six weeks of the site visit. Among other things the panel will recommend if each program should continue to be offered in its present form, should be offered on condition that specified changes are made, or should be discontinued.

END

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#### RELATED DOCUMENTS

- External Referencing: Program Benchmarking - Procedures
- Higher Degree by Research Program Accreditation - Academic Policy
- School Reviews - Operational Policy

#### RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011 (Cth)
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)