



UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA

# QUALITY AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

October 2014

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education providers in Australia are operating in a changing and dynamic regulatory environment. For example, at the time of writing:

- the higher education regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), is still in a state of flux (with possible ongoing restructuring);
- the most recent iteration of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is yet to be fully operational but will be from January 2016; and
- the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)* is under review as is the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act*.

In order to ensure the quality of Australia's higher education within this dynamic environment, institutions must meet certain teaching, research and institutional standards (as measured by TEQSA) as well as ensure they contribute to the economic and knowledge base of Australian society by meeting the Commonwealth Government's goals for "higher education, research, innovation, skills development, engagement and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access and outcomes" (as agreed in Mission Based Compacts).

In response to the challenges and responsibilities outlined above, and as part of its ongoing review and evaluation process, the University of Canberra has further developed and revised its Quality and Standards Framework. Whilst this is an internal working document, it does draw from external reference points such as (but not limited to) the Higher Education Threshold Standards (HETS), the AQF and ESOS. However, unlike the Threshold Standards, the University of Canberra's Quality and Standards Framework is underpinned by aspirational standards. In other words, the University strives to promote *strong* rather than minimal performance.

## QUALITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

The Quality and Standards Framework is the University's central quality management and enhancement process. The Framework is a programme of peer review, internal and external benchmarking with many components operating on an annual cycle. The quality cycle focuses on: plan – implement – evaluate – improve (PIEI) and embraces standards as an integral part of the quality cycle for the core and support services of the University. This approach draws on internally driven quality improvement with externally regulated aspirational standards (not minimum standards as in the HETS).

A standard is taken to mean, for the purposes of the Framework and the quality cycle, an outcome that can be externally verified. In other words, performance is measured against standards benchmarked with appropriate partners, at a national or international level. This enables the University to use an evidence based process to evaluate and compare its performance and by doing so, to monitor standards and make quality improvements.

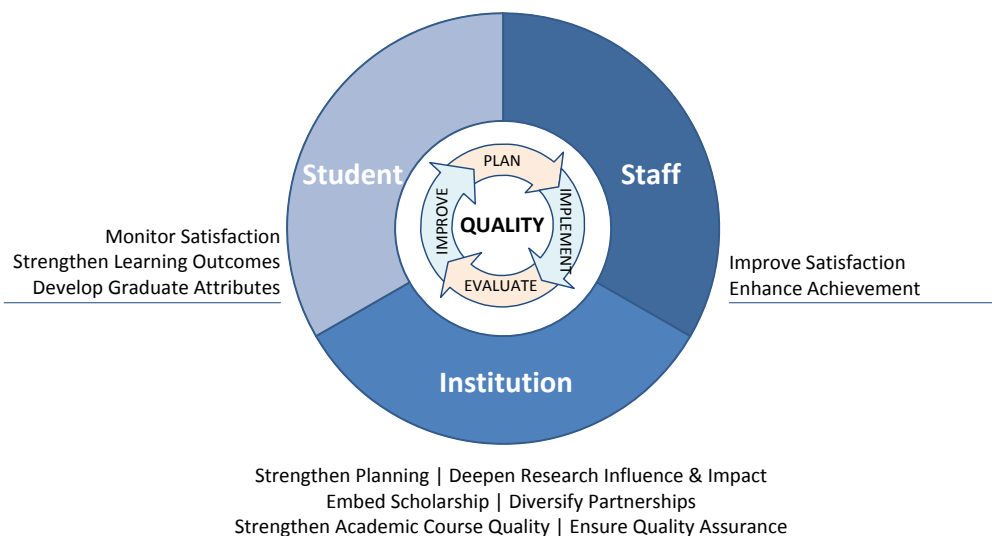
## STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Quality and Standards Framework helps the University in its goal to continuously improve by providing clear direction necessary to affect the outcomes as stated in the Strategic Plan, *Breakthrough*.

The University's Strategic, Enabling and Operational Plans form the foundation of the University's Quality and Standards Framework by identifying:

- what should be measured and how (the Quality and Standards Framework elements, their purpose, the process used to measure performance including external benchmarks where appropriate);
- the evidence of success (set key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets);
- how the University will influence the results and improve (closing the loop); and
- who is accountable for implementing each element and monitoring/evaluation of the overall outcomes.

The elements in the Framework are critical across teaching, research, and administration and management, and the intention is that they will be embedded in the core and support services of the University. The revised Framework introduces a range of new elements to the existing suite, and sees refinement in measurement, requirements for continuous improvement and a greater focus on accountability for implementation and review.



There are 11 elements to the Framework grouped under the themes of Students, Staff and Institution; two elements under 'Staff', three under 'Students' and six under 'Institution'. Within those 11 elements there are a range of more detailed 'purposes' which spell out the specific initiatives the University undertakes to affect the 11 elements. Nine of those 'purposes' have been highlighted as essential components which form the foundation of the Framework structure.

## REPORTING

Quality is everybody's business across the institution and staff need to be aware of the Quality and Standards Framework and its consequences for them and their work. The further embedding of the Framework into the culture of the University will take time and will need to be nurtured and supported.

The Framework itself is a living document and will be reviewed annually - evolving with and responding to the ever changing environment within which the University operates.

Further, the outcomes of each element of the Framework will be monitored and compiled into an Annual Report for the consideration of senior management, Academic Board and the Audit & Risk Management Committee.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Overall responsibility for the monitoring of, compliance to and further enhancement of the Quality and Standards Framework at an institutional level, resides with the Vice-President, Operations, with day to day management undertaken by the Quality and Standards Unit.

Within that office, the Quality Team manage the cyclical review of the Quality and Standards Framework; liaise with TEQSA; and with staff across the University.

Information relating to Quality at an institutional level can be found at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/quality> or by emailing [Quality@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Quality@canberra.edu.au)