

Quality Policy

Section 1 - Definitions

(1) For the purpose of this policy:

- a. Benchmarking - Means comparing processes and/or outcomes so as to provide a point of reference for good quality practices or outcomes. It can be done internally or externally. It may combine quantitative measures and qualitative descriptions of practice.
- b. Critical control points - Means the points or steps in a process at which controls are in place to ensure that quality is being applied at all stages of a process.
- c. Outputs - The University aims to enhance the cultural, social, economic and knowledge development of its footprint region through key activities of teaching, learning and research. Outputs will be measured and assessed using performance indicators and targets and will be benchmarked using internal and external data sources.
- d. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - Means the data, outcomes, measures or devices to be used for demonstrating the degree or extent of success in achievement of a University purpose or meeting a goal or objective or in implementing an action or strategy to achieve a University goal or objective. For quality assurance and improvement purposes, preference is given to the selection and use of key performance indicators that facilitate benchmarking.
- e. Performance Indicators (PIs)/Progress metrics - Means secondary measures that underpin KPIs or demonstrate the extent of achievement of a target that is not a University goal or target.
- f. Performance targets - Will be associated with performance indicators and identify specific outcomes or levels of performance that are expected or sought within a particular timeframe in order to assure or improve the University's performance.
- g. Quality assurance - Means the adoption of systematic management procedures and processes to monitor performance and to ensure achievement and improvement of the quality of outputs and thereby the University assures itself, and demonstrates to the wider community, that it is achieving its purposes and goals and meeting the standards it sets for itself or those that are externally mandated.
- h. Quality assurance manual - Means the collection of University policies and procedures that provides guidance to organisational units and educational collaborations to ensure that quality is applied at all stages of their processes.
- i. Quality principles - Means the guidelines or procedures that are developed in the organisational units to assure quality and compliance. These principles mirror University policy at the organisational unit level.
- j. Risk register - The University maintains a comprehensive register of strategic risks that may affect the University together with actions or controls that are in place to minimise these risks. The Audit and Risk Management Committee ensures governance of the issue and reports regularly to Council.

Section 2 - Policy Statement

Part A - Policy Declaration

(2) The Higher Education context in Australia holds strong quality assurance expectations of all institutions particularly self-accrediting Universities. Southern Cross University (SCU) regards quality assurance and improvement as vital throughout the University in order to realise its Mission and Strategic Priorities and meet its obligations as a self-accrediting institution.

(3) Quality assurance in higher education involves the adoption of systematic management procedures to monitor performance and to ensure achievement and improvement of the quality of outputs. The aim of quality assurance is to give stakeholders confidence in the management of operations and the outcomes achieved.

(4) Quality assurance at SCU is developed and supported through policies, principles, attitudes, actions and procedures that assure that quality is not only maintained but also enhanced.

Part B - Policy Description

Objectives

(5) The policy:

- a. outlines inter-relationship between SCU QA and the external operating environment;
- b. identifies the Planning, Implementation, Monitoring, Review and Improve (PIMRI) framework that encompasses all university activities;
- c. identifies reporting relationships across the university that support quality assurance and enhancement; and
- d. outlines processes that support quality assurance and improvement in the University.

Scope

(6) All organisational units.

Part C - Content and Implementation

(7) SCU is a self-accrediting institution and is responsible for its own standards.

(8) Quality assurance at SCU seeks to ensure that SCU meets the quality assurance measures in the higher education sector and aligns with national and transnational quality assurance standards.

(9) The SCU [Quality Framework](#) has four components (Plan, Implement, Monitor and Review, and Improve) which together form the PIMRI cycle for implementation of quality assurance. The SCU Quality Framework includes:

- a. strategic planning;
- b. operational planning aligned with budget;
- c. review of organisational units, functions and educational collaborations for quality improvement;
- d. accreditation and review of academic courses;
- e. monitoring of performance through review of evidence;
- f. collection and review of feedback from staff, students and other stakeholders; and
- g. use of external reference points to benchmark success and areas for improvement.

(10) All University plans will align with the University's Strategic Plan. The University Council is regularly informed (at least annually) on progress against Strategic Plan targets.

(11) All organisational units conduct a planning process that is informed by the University [quality framework](#) (see below for outline) and aligned with budget processes. All organisational unit plans contain key performance indicators, performance targets and quality improvement strategies.

(12) The Organisational Review Policy and Schedule are developed by the Planning and Quality Committee for approval by the Vice Chancellor. The Organisational Review Policy includes organisational unit, educational collaborations and functional/process reviews. The University's Review Schedule will be prepared taking into account relevant changes in the external environment, risk assessment, internal process and organisational changes.

(13) Organisational units may conduct other reviews as approved by the VC on the advice of the SDVC as Chair, Planning and Quality Committee.

(14) The University Council will establish a review process for itself and relevant governance committees.

(15) Academic Board will establish and conduct reviews relevant to its terms of reference and within the parameters of its rules. External assessment of professional courses is conducted through accreditation processes.

(16) All organisational units are expected to identify quality principles to assure quality and compliance where required.

(17) An evidenced-based approach will underpin the monitoring and review component of the PIMRI cycle. Institutional performance data will be identified, stored and reported to internal and external stakeholders. Feedback from students, staff and other stakeholders will be incorporated in monitoring and review processes. A reporting schedule for reporting institutional data will be developed by the Planning and Quality Committee.

(18) All reviews will contain relevant comparative or process benchmarking information in line with the SCU Benchmarking Framework.

Quality Culture

(19) All members of the University community have a stake and role in quality assurance and improvement at the University. The creation and maintenance of a culture of quality is fundamental to the effectiveness of the University's quality system therefore there is ongoing whole-of-University education about quality assurance and improvement and the [quality framework](#).

(20) Underlying the effectiveness of the [quality framework](#) is the need for University management to ensure that all members of the University community are part of the quality culture and are made aware of:

- a. all elements of the [quality framework](#);
- b. those aspects of University operations including structures, policies, principles, procedures, plans and practices that affect, guide or direct their activity as part of the quality culture; and
- c. where the related accountabilities and responsibilities lie.

(21) All members of the University Executive are responsible for ensuring that a quality assurance culture is adopted and that compliance with external responsibilities is an inherent part of quality assurance.

(22) It is expected that Quality Assurance procedures will be documented in quality assurance manuals across the University at critical control points to ensure business continuity and quality enhancement.

Section 3 - Procedures

(23) The Planning and Quality Committee is established to monitor the application of the Quality Policy and associated processes and to report to the VC on issues associated with quality assurance at SCU.

Membership

(24) The membership will consist of:

- a. Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (Chair, PQC)
- b. Chair, Academic Board
- c. Pro Vice Chancellor (Faculty of Arts and Sciences)
- d. Pro Vice Chancellor (Faculty of Business and Law)
- e. Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
- f. Director, Teaching and Learning
- g. Executive Director, Corporate Services
- h. Director, Planning Quality and Review

Terms of Reference

(25) To monitor the application of the Quality policy and framework.

(26) To advise the Vice Chancellor of quality improvement strategies.

(27) To advise the Vice Chancellor on the Review Framework and associated schedules.

(28) To monitor the alignment of planning, review and improvement.

(29) To monitor the implementation of review processes.

(30) To advise the Vice Chancellor on performance indicators and measures of University progress.

(31) To co-ordinate [AUQA](#) reviews and monitor implementation of recommendations.

(32) The SCU [Quality Framework](#) follows the PIMRI cycle of activities involving planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing, and improvement activities. The Quality Assurance Responsibility Matrix identifies the key responsibilities and quality control points for quality assurance at SCU.

Quality Assurance Responsibility Matrix

	Responsibility	Examples
Strategic Planning	Council	Strategic Plan
Planning	VCEC	Functional Plans Service Level Plans Operating Plan
Academic Quality Assurance	Academic Board (and Council)	Rules and Policies Boards of Assessors Reports Course Accreditation and Review
	Planning and Quality Committee	Quality Policy & Framework Monitoring and Report Schedule Review Framework Benchmarking report
	School/Faculty	Course Advisory Committee Moderation reports Survey reports

Non-Academic Quality Assurance	Planning and Quality Committee	Review Framework Benchmarking
	Finance Committee	Budget
	Audit and Risk Committee	Risk register Audit Reports
	SCU Internal Auditor	Audit review schedule & reports
International Quality Assurance	DVC	International Advisory Committee Offshore & Collaborative Program Review
	Faculty	Management Committee meetings
	PQR	ESOS Compliance Due Diligence
	Commercial Activities Committee	Commercial Activities Committee meetings
Institutional Performance Reporting	Vice Chancellor	Profile Reports General Report Card, Staff Profile, Course and Student Profile, KPIs
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	CEQ, GDS, AUSSE and First Year Experience Reports Annual Planning and Budget Cycle Professional accreditation & review
Research	PVC Research	Risk Management Strategy
External Review	AUQA/TEQSA	5-yearly quality Review
	Professional bodies	Professional accreditation & review

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	14th August 2012
Review Date	14th April 2015
Approval Authority	Vice Chancellor
Approval Date	10th August 2012
Expiry Date	7th March 2018
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