

Quality Assurance Policy



Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to create a Quality Assurance Framework that ensures the quality of everything the Australasian Academy of Higher Education (AAHE) does, safeguarding the quality of its academic programs and distinctive learning outcomes.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all staff at the AAHE.

Definitions

Quality	AAHE embraces the 'fitness-for-purpose' paradigm in its understanding of quality. AAHE deems its frameworks and processes fit-for-purpose if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensure compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, and• are also achieving the priorities expressed in the AAHE Strategic Plan.
Quality Assurance	Quality assurance is a demonstration or verification that a desired level of quality of an academic activity has been attained or sustained, or is highly likely to be attained or sustained. In the <i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021</i> (HES Framework), academic quality assurance is called Institutional Quality Assurance. The AAHE approach to Quality Assurance includes but extends beyond academic quality assurance to every aspect of AAHE's operations.

Policy

1. Objectives and principles

1.1 This Quality Assurance Policy seeks to:

- a) safeguard and enhance the integrity of AAHE's academic programs
- b) provide guidance in developing and implementing AAHE's policies and procedures
- c) outline the internal and external quality assurance procedures and practices necessary to realise the AAHE strategic priorities and uphold our core values
- d) lay out a governance structure that ensures quality assurance systems are coordinated and managed with maximum effectiveness
- e) facilitate development of a culture of self-evaluation and continuous quality improvement and
- f) ensure compliance with relevant legislation, national and international standards and approaches, including those adopted by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and prevailing community standards of best practice.

- 1.2 The AAHE approach to QA is underpinned by seven foundational principles that are woven through AAHE's academic and administrative operations. These are:
- a) Developmental process – Quality Assurance (QA) is a developmental process which does not have an end point.
 - b) Continuous improvement - Continuous improvement is a top priority in all aspects of AAHE's functions.
 - c) Self-assessment - AAHE will foster an ethos of critical self-assessment at individual, team and institutional levels.
 - d) Evidence-based – All decisions will be based on solid evidence.
 - e) Standards - Set standards will guide AAHE's performance in all of its key functions.
 - f) Benchmarking - AAHE will learn from good practices in other institutions through benchmarking and other relevant forms of external referencing.
 - g) Collegiality – AAHE procedures will reflect the principles of peer review, collaboration and collegial decision making.

2. Leadership

- 2.1 The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the quality of everything we do. The Board oversees quality assurance through its responsiveness to regular reports on academic programs, compliance with our regulatory and legislative obligations, our financial performance, risk management and operational effectiveness.
- 2.2 The Academic Board has delegated responsibility from the Board of Directors for quality assurance of all academic activities, including oversight of policies and procedures relating to academic standards, academic quality benchmarking and actions arising, effectiveness of AAHE's academic integrity processes, and performance in teaching and scholarship.
- 2.3 The Executive Management Committee under the leadership of the Principal and Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing the QA Framework outlined in this Policy, with the support of the Quality Assurance Manager.
- 2.4 QA is not just the responsibility of Executive Management, however, but is attained through a shared commitment to excellence by everyone at AAHE. Every staff member shall therefore be responsible and be held accountable for the quality of operations that fall within their sphere of influence.

3. Quality Management

- 3.1 AAHE embraces the provisions of Total Quality Management (TQM) as applied to higher education¹. TQM is a comprehensive approach that promotes continuous improvement in all aspects of AAHE's operations underpinned by progressive advances in attitudes, practices, structures and systems. The approach calls for commitment and diligence by every staff member to maintain high standards of work in every aspect of AAHE's operations.
- 3.2 The defining features of TQM in higher education are:

¹ Muhammad, A et al (2013) A model for total quality management in higher education. *Quality & Quantity* volume 47, pp. 1883–1904.

- a) Quality is ultimately defined by the success and satisfaction of our students
- b) Increased quality comes from systematic analysis and improvement of work processes, and
- c) Quality assurance is a continuous effort and conducted throughout the organisation.

3.3 Total Quality Management at AAHE involves:

- a) developing policies and procedures that ensure the quality of AAHE awards
- b) setting clear and explicit performance standards in all aspects of AAHE operations
- c) monitoring the implementation of all AAHE policies and QA processes
- d) monitoring data about the performance of students and student cohorts as well as student and graduate satisfaction
- e) analysing self-evaluation and policy implementation reports to identify any issues that require improvement
- f) facilitating internal and external evaluation of AAHE operations and accreditation of academic programs by relevant experts and professional bodies
- g) monitoring implementation of recommendations arising from internal and external evaluation
- h) monitoring trends in QA matters nationally and internationally, and
- i) synthesising new approaches to QA informed by research in higher education.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 There is no single procedure for Quality Assurance at AAHE. We employ multiple strategies across the entirety of our policies and operations to ensure that the objectives of this Quality Assurance Policy are achieved.
- 4.2 All new Policies and Procedures will be followed by implementation reports within the first year of operation.
- 4.3 All AAHE Plans will be reviewed according to a set schedule aligned with AAHE's 5-yearly planning cycle. All AAHE Policies and Procedures will be reviewed every five years according to a schedule maintained by the Quality Assurance Manager.
- 4.4 The Board of Directors approves the processes and procedures for periodic external institutional audits and reviews. Institutional audits and reviews will be performed by an external expert or panel of experts appointed by the Board of Directors. The Panel shall act on the basis of specific terms of reference approved by the Board.
- 4.5 All AAHE academic programs will undergo self- and external review according to a schedule determined by the Academic Board. The terms of reference for such reviews are specified in the Course Review Policy.
- 4.6 Staff and students will be kept informed of AAHE's QA initiatives and developments through publications, newsletters, the AAHE website, and reports to the Board of Directors and Academic Board.
- 4.7 The CEO will meet at least annually with all staff, academic and administrative, for the purpose of exploring new QA ideas and sharing information related to quality.

- 4.8 Each member of Executive Management will lead periodic Discussion Forums in their portfolio areas to provide informal opportunities to discuss quality assurance issues, to identify information that needs to feed into AAHE’s governance structures.
- 4.9 AAHE will periodically compile and analyse student performance data (especially progress rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and assessment outcomes) overall, by course and by cohort, and undertake external referencing of these against comparable courses elsewhere
- 4.10 AAHE will regularly and systematically organize student and staff satisfaction surveys with the aim of gathering feedback on experiences with AAHE services.
- 4.11 Student Satisfaction Surveys will provide students with the opportunity to provide feedback on:
- a) their courses and units
 - b) our approach to teaching and learning
 - c) Work Integrated Learning
 - d) student support services.
- 4.12 AAHE will conduct an annual staff experience survey for academic and professional staff. The general aim of these surveys will be to collect information on:
- e) satisfaction with AAHE as an employer
 - f) satisfaction with AAHE’s teaching and learning
 - g) satisfaction with staff support services, and
 - h) ideas for quality improvement.
- 4.13 AAHE will report on the findings of student performance and satisfaction data analyses, and report to the Board and Academic Board on the lessons learned with any plans or proposals for further improvements.
- 4.14 As with all AAHE policies, this Quality Assurance Policy will be reviewed in alignment with AAHE’s overarching planning cycle.

Related documents and relevant legislation

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Sections 5.1-5.4).

TEQSA Guidance Note: ‘Academic Quality Assurance’ Version 2.2 (11 October 2017)

AAHE Policy on Policies

AAHE Governance Charter

AAHE Delegations Policy and Schedule

AAHE Course Review Policy and Procedure

Document information

Document owner: Board of Directors

Version	Approved by	Approved on	Implementation date	Changes made
1	Board of Directors	14/10/21	1/10/23	