Course Review and Quality Assurance Policy

Commencement Date
1 June 2014

1.0 Purpose

This policy provides a framework for AGME to conduct academic reviews of its higher education courses, which is transparent for all stakeholders. The purpose is to:

- ensure that courses are reviewed systematically for continuous improvement
- provide quality assurance based on coherent improvement processes integrating key elements of teaching and learning to achieve outcomes

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Guild's higher education community.

3.0 Objectives

The Guild's overarching objective is to offer quality higher education courses. The key objectives are to ensure relevance and quality of courses.

4.0 Implementation

Systematic review and external renewal of course accreditation provides an opportunity for continuous improvement that will incorporate input from all major stakeholder groups. Academic offerings will be reviewed in terms of relevance, demand, quality and deliverability. Courses and units may also come under review due to requests or feedback received from lecturers, students and/or administrative staff.

Academic reviews are conducted for entire courses and individual subjects. These reviews are conducted internally on an ongoing basis as part of the continuous improvement process, together with regular external reviews of entire courses or partial reviews.

4.1 Course reviews

The following provides an overview of the types of course review processes:

1. Any proposal to make a major/material change to a higher education course structure, content or delivery requires a course change proposal to be approved by the Academic Board; Committee of Management and the external accrediting authority.

2. Minor changes to courses and subjects that constitute continuous improvement, whilst maintaining coherency of the course, only require internal approval by the Academic Board after consideration and recommendation from the Dean.

The Guild will implement regular review processes taking account of the academic review objectives of this policy. A variety of academic review mechanisms are available to The Guild such as:

- internal partial course and subject review
- external full course review
- external audit/assessment/accreditation
4.2 Types of Review

**Ongoing Reviews**
The Guild will conduct regular internal reviews of subjects on an ongoing basis. Every five years an external review process will be conducted for the renewal of course accreditation and submission to TEQSA. For each type of review process, a range of data will be collected to inform the academic review process and effect continuous improvement of The Guild’s higher education courses. TEQSA states that changes of more than 30% constitute a material change.

Any proposal to make a material change to an approved higher education course structure, content or delivery, which constitutes a ‘material change’ requires a course change proposal to be approved by the Academic Board and the external accrediting authority.

The Academic Board shall have regard for the nature and extent of the changes recommended, and if deemed to be material changes requiring approval by TEQSA, then a submission shall be prepared to seek approval from TEQSA before implementing the changes.

**Benchmarking activities:**
These will be conducted with partnering institutions and outcomes used to inform curriculum review, together with benchmarking against similar courses at other higher education institutions.

**External Review – accreditation:**
All non self-accrediting institutions wishing to offer higher education courses in Australia are subject to external assessment for registration of the organisation and accreditation of its higher education courses by the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). Renewal of approval occurs every five to seven years as a general rule, but the interval may be altered by TEQSA.

The Academic Board will initiate a review of The Guild’s higher education courses in sufficient time for submission to TEQSA. The Academic Board may appoint a Course Advisory Committee to undertake an internal and external review of the courses due for renewal of accreditation. The revised curriculum, once approved by the Academic Board and Committee of Management, will be forwarded to TEQSA for assessment.

**Material Changes**
Recommended changes arising from Unit Review Reports or Course Review Reports that constitute a major/material change to a subject or course, as per the following extract from the TEQSA Guideline, will need to be submitted to TEQSA for approval, after approval from the Academic Board. Additional information will need to be prepared based on TEQSA’s requirements.

TEQSA states that changes of more than 30% constitute a material change. It also provides the following information to assist with identifying material changes.

“TEQSA encourages early notification of material changes to a TEQSA-accredited course of study. Before submitting a material change, providers should have regard to whether the changes are minor or sufficiently substantial to effectively lead to a new course of study and/or impact on the provider’s continuing compliance with the Provider Course Accreditation Standards and the Qualification Standards). In the latter case, an application for course accreditation is required. Events would include any of the following:

- plans to deliver a TEQSA-accredited course of study in a different language
- plans to cease a TEQSA-accredited course of study
Plans to change a TEQSA-accredited course of study in relation to:

1. course title (for updating of the National register of higher Education Providers)
2. course duration or volume of learning resulting in a notable reduction or increase in student contact hours
3. mode of delivery (such as a change from predominantly face to face delivery to predominantly e-learning delivery)
4. changes affecting curriculum content, curriculum design, and/or learning outcomes (for example through the addition of a new major or specialisation stream)
5. substitution of a number of existing subjects with new subjects and/or deletion of a number of subjects in the course of study
6. significant changes to key academic policies and procedures, such as a major change in admission requirements (for example, a drop in English language entry level requirements) or a major change to course development policies (for example, a change in approach that reduces external input)
7. activation of a tuition assurance scheme.

If any course of study subject to a material change is offered to international students, there may be additional requirements under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 and the National Code 2007.

4.3 Key Performance Indicators
The criteria to measure and evaluate course performance will be consistent and vigorous. Course quality will be reflected in course design, delivery, assessment and management. The underlying principles in achieving course review objectives are that processes are to be:

1. Evidence based
2. Efficient (particularly in its use of staff time)
3. Rigorous
4. Transparent
5. Objective
6. Inclusive of staff at all levels

4.4 Impact

Students
The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that any proposed changes do not unduly disadvantage students. This includes students’ ability to complete core subjects. When a proposed change removes or replaces core units; affects the credit points; or changes the structure in any way that may affect students, transitional arrangements must be prepared to demonstrate that students will not unduly disadvantaged so that they can continue and complete the course within a reasonable time period. For major changes, a clearly defined mapping document will be provided to demonstrate articulation from the obsolete course to the new course structure. If an entire course is to be discontinued, then contingency arrangements must be made to assist students with finding another course.

No new enrolments will be accepted into a discontinued course. For any pending applications or enrolments, students must be notified and where possible transferred to an alternative EIT course, or other course.

All students enrolled in a course at the time of discontinuation should be allowed the opportunity to complete the course under the advertised structure and timeframe at the time of their enrolment, wherever possible. Students will not be permitted to defer their studies.

Staff
All higher education staff must be notified of approved changes to courses and/or subjects as soon as practical, including discontinuation of courses or subjects.

4.5 Procedure
Academic teaching staff will contribute to the monitoring process via their input at staff meetings, on trends and issues and providing specific input when requested.

The Academic Board may request specific monitoring of any issues that arise from time to time.

The Curriculum Change Register will document key details of changes made to the course and individual units as a result of the academic review process. The Curriculum Change Register is a key document that provides the history of all changes made as part of the continuous improvement process that will feed into the renewal of accreditation process.

Internal Review Monitoring
The following data collected from surveys and other data collection mechanisms will be analysed:

- Student feedback on the course and subjects including assessment, labs, IT and internet support infrastructure and tools
- Student feedback on teaching
- Staff feedback on all aspects of the course, subjects and delivery
- Enrolment, entry requirements and student attrition data
- Student progression data including grade distributions and moderation outcomes
- Student/staff ratios
- Articulation pathway data
- Feedback from external stakeholders
- Benchmarking

Five Year Review Cycle

Years 1 – 4 Continuous Improvement Cycle

Step 1 Unit Report (each term)
Lecturers are to report on their individual units at the end of each term. This should include how students are progressing/maintaining their course work, student feedback, lecturer feedback of course resources and material, new introduced lecture content resourced, research recommendations, etc.

Step 2 Annual Course Report
The Head of Department and/or Unit Coordinators meet with unit lecturers who then review responses reported. Information is then formed as part of a written report upon meeting conclusions, and written reports are given to the Dean to form part of the Course Summary Report. Each year the Course Summary Report will be submitted to the Academic Board for approval of minor changes to the course, as part of the continuous improvement cycle.

Year 5 Full Course Review

Step 3 Course Summary Reports
In the fifth year, the Dean will create a Course Summary Report for the Bachelor of Music course, which will detail the findings of the annual course review reports and any recommendations made verbally by external sources and/or faculty members or industry suggestions.

Step 4 Invitation to Appoint External Experts
The process for invitations to appoint external experts is outlined below.

(1) Procedure to select External Course Review Expert/s:
   a. After consultation with the Academic Board, the Dean shall recommend possible External Expert/s to the Academic Board. CVs will be required for each proposed external expert.
   b. The Dean shall provide a list of names to the Academic Board for consideration.
   c. The Academic Board will select an expert or experts from the list or ask the Dean to provide further names and details.

(2) Procedure to invite the External Course Review Expert/s:
   a. The Academic Board will invite the External Course Review Expert/s to conduct a review of the course, and provide a report to the Academic Board on their findings.

Step 5 External Course Review
In the 5th year preferably prior to each accreditation, a full course review will be completed by external experts. The external experts will be provided with the Course Summary Report and the Course Review and Quality Assurance Policy, and will be given guest access to online course unit pages and additional course resources and student information documents that will form part of the review.

Step 6 External Course Review Report
A suite of templates will be given to the External Expert/s to guide their review. The External Expert/s may either use the template provided or write a full report on the recommendations or affirmations regarding the course review. A rationale must be included where recommendations are made.

Step 7 Findings of the Expert Report
The reports from the external experts will be sent to the Academic Board for distribution amongst members by the secretary of the Academic Board. The Academic Board will consider the external reviewers comments, and discuss at the next meeting of the Academic Board. The Board will develop a plan of priorities from the experts’ recommendations, which will be provided to the Dean for a response.

Step 8 Dean’s Report
The Dean will prepare a response to the external reviewers’ recommendations for consideration by the Academic Board. This will include a proposed Course Amendment Plan with timeframes and a rationale for any recommendations that are not to be effected.

Course Documentation
Step 9 Amending Course Documentation
The Dean will commence implementing the recommendations by updating course material documentation and liaising with academic staff. The Dean will provide progress reports to the Academic Board against the Course Amendment Plan.

Step 10 Renewal of accreditation
The Academic Board will submit the External Reviewer’s Reports; the Dean’s Response and Implementation Plan; and updated course materials with the application for renewal of accreditation to TEQSA for their consideration.

Step 11 Implementation of Revised Curriculum
Once approved by TEQSA, the Academic Board will advise the Dean to commence implementation of the revised curriculum.

5.0 Definitions
A glossary is provided at Appendix 1.

6.0 Related policies and procedures

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:
- Curriculum Change Register
- Teaching and Learning Policy (under review)
- Teaching and Learning Plan (under review)
- Terms of Reference Academic Board

7.0 Review

Three years from commencement.

8.0 Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Guild’s community via the website and other publications.

9.0 Revision History

Date Created: 14 May 2014

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<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Revision Due Date</th>
<th>Revision Date</th>
<th>Approved Date</th>
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<td>Academic Board</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>31/5/2017</td>
<td>16/5/14</td>
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<td>Development of new policy to replaced former Course Review Policy</td>
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Appendix 1 - Glossary

Articulation – a defined pathway that enables a student to progress from a completed course of study to another course of study with admission and/or credit.

Attrition – is the proportion of students commencing a course of study in a given year who neither complete nor return in the following year. It does not identify those students who defer their study or transfer to another institution. TEQSA

Benchmarking – Benchmarking is recognised as a means by which an entity can: demonstrate accountability to stakeholders; improve networking and collaborative relationships; generate management information; develop an increased understanding of practice, process or performance; and garner insights into how improvements might be made. In the context of course accreditation, benchmarking involves comparing performance outcomes and/or processes of similar courses of study delivered by other providers. ‘internal benchmarking’ against other relevant courses offered by the provider may also be undertaken.

Course – a single course leading to an Australian higher education award.

Grade distributions – are set by each higher education provider and involve analysing the aggregation of final grades using data by subject, course of study, student cohort or other grouping.

Graduate attributes – generic learning outcomes that refer to transferable, non-discipline specific skills that a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) - A set of quantifiable measures used to gauge or compare performance in terms of meeting strategic and operational goals.

Learning outcomes – learning outcomes are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills (both cognitive and physical) and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

Nested courses – courses of study leading to higher education awards that include articulated arrangements from a lower level higher education award into a higher level higher education award to enable multiple entry and exit points.

Student progression rates – is the equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) passed as a percentage of the EFTSL attempted (comprising subjects passed, failed and withdrawn and excluding work experience in industry load)

Student/staff ratio – is calculated by dividing the student load by the associated teaching staff effort where:

- student load is expressed as equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) and
- teaching staff effort is the number of teachers expressed as full-time equivalents (FTE).

Unit - A unit/subject is a discrete unit of study and a combination of subjects make up a course of study.