

Academic Unit Review Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University (CDU) is committed to regular and systematic evaluation and review of academic units as part of its commitment to quality enhancement and a continuous quality improvement cycle. Reviews will consider past and present performance of the academic unit as it relates to the University Strategic Plan, sub-plans, academic unit plans and any previous reviews.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This Procedure provides the process to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of core activities (teaching and learning, research and scholarship, engagement) via self-assessment and provision of feedback on performance, resourcing, capability, capacity and impact of the academic organisational unit. The aim is to engender a culture of critical self-reflection, benchmarking and external assessment, and the development and implementation of strategies that will improve performance.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to academic units including Faculties, research centres and institutes of the University.

Section 4 - Procedure

Scheduling

(4) Each academic unit will be reviewed once every five years. The Vice-Chancellor with the Provost will establish and disseminate a schedule for reviews. Reviews may be initiated by the Vice-Chancellor outside the normal schedule.

Review Components

(5) Key elements of academic unit review process include:

- a. Terms of Reference;
- b. Review Portfolio;
- c. Review Panel;
- d. Written Submissions;
- e. Review Panel Visit;
- f. Review Report; and
- g. Implementation Plan.

Terms of Reference

(6) The Terms of Reference provide guidance for the academic unit Review Portfolio and the Review Panel appraisal of

the academic unit's performance and plans in relation to appropriate and attainable future objectives, and provide recommendations for improvement.

(7) As a tool for continuous quality improvement, the Review Portfolio should give consideration to national and international contexts and trends, recognised best practice and other relevant benchmarking, and the operation and impact of relationships between the academic unit and other areas within the University.

(8) The standard Terms of Reference as outlined below and further described in Appendix A may be adapted or modified by consultation with Academic Board, the Provost and/or the Head of academic unit, to direct the attention of the academic unit and/or the review panel to matters of importance to the academic unit's performance or its future.

- a. Strategy and Planning;
- b. Leadership and Governance;
- c. Teaching and Learning;
- d. Research and Scholarship;
- e. First Nations Leadership;
- f. Engagement;
- g. Internationalisation.

Review Portfolio

(9) A Review Portfolio will be prepared for consideration of the Review Panel by the academic unit under review, with assistance from the Director Planning and Performance and other relevant areas of the University. The Review Portfolio will address the Terms of Reference and provide a self-assessment of performance including relevant data, and identify areas of excellence, potential, initiatives in progress and opportunities for improvement.

(10) The Review Portfolio should be a maximum of 30 pages (plus any supporting documentation including data in appendices).

(11) The Review Portfolio will be made available to relevant University staff and students and key stakeholders at least four weeks before the Review Panel convenes.

Review Panel

(12) The Provost will establish a Review Panel for each academic unit Review. The Panel's purpose is to review and make commendations or recommendations regarding the academic unit under review with reference to the Review Portfolio, written submissions, interviews with stakeholders, benchmarking and practice at other Australian universities.

(13) The academic unit Review Panel shall:

- a. provide independent advice and recommendations on the performance, future directions, resourcing, capability, capacity and impact of the academic unit under review;
- b. be briefed on the academic unit Review by the Provost and/or the Vice-Chancellor, and identify and agree any modifications to the standard Terms of Reference for the Review;
- c. receive and consider the Review Portfolio prepared by the Head of the academic unit;
- d. liaise with the Review Secretary on issuing a call for written submissions and developing a Review Panel itinerary and list of interested parties and stakeholders to be involved in the onsite visit;
- e. consider written submissions from interested parties and stakeholders, and make initial judgements on confidentiality of submissions;
- f. conduct onsite review / interviews with:

- i. academic unit staff members selected by the Head of the academic unit;
 - ii. academic unit students selected by the Head of the academic unit;
 - iii. relevant members of Senior Executive Team, Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group, Academic Board;
 - iv. other people at the discretion of the Review Panel, including internal and external stakeholders, interested parties who have provided written submissions.
- g. at conclusion of scheduled interviews, prepare a verbal brief for the Provost /Vice-Chancellor and Head of the academic unit on high level findings, commendations and recommendations, and advise the Head to speak to staff who may be significantly impacted by the review;
- h. prepare a draft written report and recommendations for the Vice-Chancellor in accordance with the Terms of Reference provided for Review Portfolio / academic unit Review within two weeks of completing the onsite visit.

Membership

(14) The membership of an academic unit Review Panel will normally comprise the following:

- a. Review Chair – external to the academic unit and usually external to the University, chosen following consultation with the Head of the academic unit under review, who will be a senior academic or professional with nationally / internationally recognised expertise from relevant fields, and experience in conducting organisational reviews;
- b. At least one other external member – a senior academic or professional with nationally / internationally recognised expertise from relevant fields;
- c. A senior member of staff from the University, external to the academic unit being reviewed, and usually a member of Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee; and
- d. Additional members as necessary.

(15) The Provost will approve the membership of the academic unit Review Panel, with advice from the Head of the academic unit under review. The Panel will seek gender balance and diversity in its membership. Administrative support will be provided by Teaching and Learning Connect.

(16) Panel members are required to declare to the Chair any potential conflicts of interest with any item on the Panel's agenda. The Panel will declare any potential conflicts of interest in their published report.

Written Submissions

(17) University staff and relevant students and key stakeholders who receive the Review Portfolio will be invited to provide written submissions to the Review Panel at least four weeks before the Panel meets. Unless otherwise stated, written submissions will be treated as confidential.

(18) The secretary of the panel will provide written submissions to the Review Panel at least one week before the Panel meets.

Review Panel Visit

(19) A program of Review Panel meetings will be prepared in consultation with the Panel Chair and relevant senior staff members.

(20) The Panel meetings and verbal brief to Provost /Vice-Chancellor and Head of academic unit may be conducted in person, by telephone, videoconference or other electronic means.

Review Report

(21) At minimum, the Review Report will include the following sections:

- a. Executive Summary
- b. Membership
- c. Body of the report, organised according to the sections of the Review Portfolio:
 - i. Strategy and Planning;
 - ii. Leadership and Governance;
 - iii. Teaching and Learning;
 - iv. Research and Scholarship;
 - v. First Nations Leadership;
 - vi. Engagement;
 - vii. Internationalisation.
- d. Appendices

(22) The Review Report will reference the evidence and conclusions contained in the Review Portfolio and may benchmark or comment on how these compare to practice at other Australian universities, as well as perceptions and information supplied in written submission and interview.

(23) The Review Report will be presented at Academic Board with a request for the Head of the academic unit to present on the key findings of the review.

Implementation Plan

(24) The Draft Review Report will be checked with the Head of academic unit and other stakeholders for any errors of fact or misrepresentation, and any inclusions considered to potentially pose a serious risk to the University if made public, prior to approval.

(25) The Head of the academic unit, Academic Board and other relevant stakeholders will provide a response to the Review Report including follow-up actions within six weeks of receiving the approved Review Report. The Provost /Vice-Chancellor will consider the responses and approve an Implementation Plan that includes near-term (up to six months) and medium to long-term actions (up to 18 months).

(26) The Review Report and approved Implementation Plan will be tabled at Academic Board and published.

(27) The Head of the academic unit will report annually to Academic Board and Provost (with submissions to Executive Leadership Group and CDU Council for noting) on the status of academic unit reviews and progress against implementation plans. Academic Board will report on Review Reports and Implementation Plans to the Executive Leadership Group and CDU Council as required.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(28) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the [Code of Conduct – Staff](#) or the [Code of Conduct – Students](#), as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the [Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025](#) and the [Code of Conduct – Students](#).

(29) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the [Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees](#) and [Complaints Policy - Students](#).

(30) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or

Section 6 - Appendix A Review Portfolio / Review Report

(31) The standard Terms of Reference as outlined below may be adapted or modified by consultation with Academic Board, the Provost and/or the Head of the academic unit, to direct the attention of the academic unit and/or the review panel to matters of importance to the academic unit's performance or its future.

Executive Summary

Membership (Review Report only)

Strategy and Planning

(32) Capacity to identify and contribute to the University's future needs and strategic ambitions as they relate to the academic unit;

(33) Alignment of the academic unit's strategic and operational plans with the University's Strategic Plan and contribution to planning across CDU operational and academic units where relevant;

(34) Identification of best practice and national and international contexts and trends in relevant disciplines / professions, learning and teaching, research and scholarship, and engagement, and their translation into appropriate and attainable future objectives;

(35) Planning processes and outcomes including workforce planning, positioning of academic activity.

Leadership and Governance

(36) The academic unit's academic leadership and governance arrangements, including leadership and committee roles, student participation on committees, internal quality assurance, risk management, and compliance measures;

(37) Suitability of the academic unit's workforce profile (level, qualifications/accreditation, staff workload and work functions) and for units taught and staff student ratios;

(38) Workforce matters including employee recruitment planning and retention, culture, and an overview of the academic unit's performance review and development and mentoring processes;

(39) Management of professional accreditation requirements of courses;

(40) Revenue and cost management, including planning and budget management across Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) funding arrangements and targets;

(41) Suitability and utilisation of the academic unit's physical resources (e.g. space, IT, other infrastructure);

(42) Key relationships and dependencies, extent of cross-disciplinary and cross-academic unit collaboration;

(43) Feedback from students, staff and other stakeholders; the management of complaints or grievances from students and staff; and the efficacy of student and employee support mechanisms; and

(44) Extent and efficacy of VET-HE integration.

Teaching and Learning

- (45) The context of teaching and learning within the academic unit, including accredited and non-accredited programs, micro-credentials, ePortfolios and embedded programs offered, student demand, conversion and market strength;
- (46) Effectiveness of teaching and learning governance, including example academic unit Learning & Teaching Committee, Course Advisory Groups and discipline meeting minutes;
- (47) Suitability of the curricula being taught, learning objectives, course and unit management, assessment practices and level of academic support provided;
- (48) Teaching and learning outcomes, including any previous academic unit or course reviews, unit feedback, professional accreditation of courses, student experience, graduate outcomes, Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) data and employee feedback;
- (49) Teaching and learning performance, including enrolments, retention/attrition, completions and completion times, pass rates and student grades, student experience and graduate outcomes e.g. Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) learner engagement and employer satisfaction quality indicators, Learning and Teaching Grant outcomes, comparisons with alternative Australian programs;
- (50) Activities that promote and support teaching skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles and practices in tertiary education, including digital and learning technologies;
- (51) A comparison of teaching and learning performance across campuses and study centres/hubs;
- (52) Academic unit strategies for ensuring that employees have skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to their discipline, sector and role, the modes of delivery in which they teach and the needs of particular student cohorts within their courses; and
- (53) Academic unit strategies and activities for monitoring employee outcomes regarding the scholarship of learning and teaching/vocational education currency, and disciplinary scholarship /industry currency (applicable to VET or HE teaching).

Research and Scholarship

- (54) The academic unit's research governance and areas of research focus and how areas are supported/resourced;
- (55) Engagement in, or support for, University Research Institutes and Centres;
- (56) Research achievements and their contribution to CDU's research key performance indicators in relation to research publications (including citation data), Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) outcomes, Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) research income generated, evidence of research impact, research awards, prizes;
- (57) Research higher degree student load and completions, by course (high-cost and low-cost), domestic or fee-paying and First Nations candidates;
- (58) Important research collaborations locally, nationally, and internationally; and
- (59) Academic unit activities to promote and support staff scholarly activity within the discipline in which they teach.

First Nations Leadership

- (60) Contribution to First Nations engagement in teaching and learning including indigenisation of curriculum, development of pathways between VET and HE, micro-credentials, First Nations student recruitment, retention and

success;

(61) Efforts to recruit, employ and recognise First Nations staff and collaborators/stakeholders, provide career pathways for First Nations staff, and create a suitable and supportive work and learning environment; and

(62) Contribution to First Nations engagement in research and scholarship, e.g. engagement in design of research / determination of research priorities, genuine collaboration in conducting research.

Engagement

(63) Relevant internal and external engagement and social innovation, involving mutually beneficial collaborations;

(64) Quality of relationships with other entities responsible for course delivery or other academic activity for the academic unit, including a summary of each entities' responsibilities, quality assurance and governance arrangements, any contracts or agreements;

(65) Relevant employee awards, engagement with key stakeholders and relevant external organisations, alumni-related activities, promotional and outreach activities and externally funded scholarships and prizes.

Internationalisation

(66) Internationalisation of teaching and research;

(67) Internationalisation of/efforts to diversify student population, provide study abroad opportunities for domestic students, and academic unit support mechanisms for international students;

(68) Identification and development strategic alliances; and

(69) Staff and student perceptions of the academic unit's culture of internationalisation, including regular review of international student support mechanisms.

Appendices

(70) Academic unit organisational charts, strategic and operational plans, program portfolio, course performance data, research performance data, student surveys, workforce profile and plans, and other appendices as appropriate.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	25th January 2022
Review Date	25th January 2025
Approval Authority	University Secretary
Approval Date	25th January 2022
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Scott Bowman Vice-Chancellor
Implementation Officer	Fiona Coulson Provost
Enquiries Contact	Fiona Coulson Provost

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.