Course Review and Quality Assurance Policy

1.0 Purpose:
The policy provides a framework for the Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT) to conduct academic reviews of its higher education courses, which is transparent for all stakeholders. The process involves linking intention and design, implementation, outcomes (which are reviewed) and improvement.

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
- Build upon and align with other academic policies and procedures to achieve key objectives identified by EIT

Benchmarking with comparable courses nationally and/or internationally will also be used to inform academic review.

2.0 Scope:
This policy is relevant for EIT academic and administration staff as well as external stakeholders involved in both the creation of academic programs and quality assurance. It applies to all higher education courses, campuses and members of EIT’s higher education community, the general community, industry and the professions.
Subjects within nested courses will be reviewed together as one subject, taking into account the objectives for each course and their individual learning outcomes. Key activities that form part of this review process are to collect data on student learning, provide interpretation of that data, and indicate emerging trends according to key indicators of student performance.

This policy does not focus on the teaching capacity of individual teachers within the course.

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

3.0 Objectives

The overarching objective of EIT is to offer higher education courses that are coherent, integrated, and enable students to achieve the requisite outcomes appropriate to the course aims in an online environment. Ongoing responsibility for course quality will be embedded in academic and management practice. The key objectives of the course review process are to ensure:

a. Relevance of courses
   This relates to the course reputation as viewed by key stakeholders and to the meaningful contribution that its graduates can make to their profession and to society. It is reflected in the alignment of course content and outcomes to labour market priorities and those areas identified by industry partners as being high priority.

b. Viability of courses
   This refers to course cost effectiveness and sustainability. It also reflects the demand for the course, how well students progress through the course, and the return on investment from the course offering.

c. Quality of courses
   - Ensures achievement of consistent and high standard learning outcomes and assessments for the course in an on-line delivery mode engineering environment
   - Develops graduate capabilities and competencies identified as important to stakeholder groups and that meet accreditation standards
   - Relates capability and competency development to learning outcomes and activities
   - Measures capability, competency development and learning outcomes through valid and reliable assessment strategies.
   - Provides resources that support students’ learning to achieve learning outcomes
   - Ensures effective and efficient course management.

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.
4.1 Course reviews
The following provides an overview of the types of course review processes:

1. All new higher education courses are subject to approval (strategic and business case) initially by the Academic Board; then the Governance Board who submits an application to the main external accrediting authority, TEQSA (and others such as ECSA, DETC and Engineers Australia). The process for developing new courses is located in the Course Development Policy and Procedure.

2. 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; Governance Board and the external accrediting authority.

3. 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 Board of Studies, or Course Advisory Committee.

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

- Internal partial course and subject review
- External full course review
- External audit/assessment/accreditation
- Professional accreditation.

4.2 Types of Review

Ongoing Reviews
EIT will conduct regular internal reviews of subjects on an ongoing basis. At the end of each cohort for each course, an external review process will be implemented. 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 EIT’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. (Refer to the Benchmarking Policy for further details of the process and activities.)

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 years as a general rule, but the interval may be altered by TEQSA.
The Academic Board will initiate a review of EIT’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 Governance Board, will be forwarded to TEQSA for assessment.

Professional Accreditation:
At this stage, EIT’s postgraduate higher education courses are not required to be accredited by a professional agency (in Australia), as only undergraduate Engineering courses are subject to professional accreditation. EIT will monitor any possible changes in the future. Therefore, engineering students usually have already completed an undergraduate degree, which enables professional registration (“Stage one Competency”) and is recognised for work in the engineering profession.

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 key performance indicators set out in EIT’s Strategic Plan and Teaching and Learning Policy and Teaching and Learning Plan will be used to measure performance, taking account of the course review objectives.

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 Student Impact
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.

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:
- Course Review and Quality Assurance Procedure
- Curriculum Change Register
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Teaching and Learning Plan
- Benchmarking Policy
- Academic Board Terms of Reference
- Board of Studies Terms of Reference
- Course Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
7.0 Accountabilities
The Terms of Reference for each of the academic governance committees shall determine the composition of panel members and their roles and responsibilities in relation to course reviews.

The Dean and Deputy Dean are responsible for implementing approved changes, and undertaking any other tasks as assigned by any of the academic governance committees.
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 recognized 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).

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