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COURSE REVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

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1.0 Purpose

This 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 all accredited higher education courses are subject to periodic, systematic and comprehensive review (at least once during the accreditation period, but typically every two to three years) for continuous improvement and reaccreditation purposes, overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities with comparable courses nationally and/or internationally.
- 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.

The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student and staff feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided at EIT and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

2.0 Scope

This policy is relevant for EIT academic and administration staff as well as external stakeholders involved in both the review 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.

Units within nested courses will be reviewed together as one course, considering 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 lecturers within a 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. 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 all delivery modes
   - 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

A comprehensive review includes the design and content of a course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

Systematic review and external renewal of course accreditation provides an opportunity for continuous improvement that will incorporate input from all major stakeholder groups.

Courses and units may also come under review due to requests or feedback received from lecturers, students and/or administrative staff.

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4.1 Course reviews

Comprehensive and systematic review of courses of study are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring, of the quality of teaching and supervision/support of students, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.

All review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:
- analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and
- the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

All students and staff have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and this feedback informs course review and improvement activities.

The following provides an overview of the types of course review processes:
1. All new higher education courses are subject to approval by the Academic Board who approves submission of an accreditation application to the main external accrediting authority, TEQSA (and others such as ECSA, DEAC and Engineers Australia). The process for developing new courses is detailed 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 and the external accrediting authority.
3. Minor changes to courses and units that constitute continuous improvement, whilst maintaining coherency of the course, only require internal approval by the Dean after consideration and recommendation from the Board of Studies, or Course Advisory Committee, where required.
4. The Governance Board does not review the details of any proposed higher education course unless they specifically request to do so. They however do discuss, modify and sign off on a regularly tabled Business Plan update - specifically on the Project Plan (and budget) outlining new courses, applications (such as accreditation) and general projects (e.g. IT upgrades). This is mainly from the perspective of the overall financial health of the college. The project plan (and associated budget) typically has a detailed future horizon of two years.

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 unit review
- External full course review
- External audit/assessment/accreditation
- Professional accreditation

To ensure continued external input into ongoing course review and development, the Course Advisory Committees (CACs) will convene every 12 months and will ensure engineering sub-discipline areas are covered in each membership to review all higher education courses.

4.2 Types of Review

Ongoing Reviews

EIT will conduct regular internal reviews of units and courses on an ongoing basis.. Across the course accreditation timeframe, 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.

The extent of change pertaining to course review processes and the approval process needs to take account of whether the changes are considered minor or significant. The Dean and/or Deputy Dean shall have regard to the nature and extent of the changes recommended, and if deemed to be significant or major, as defined by TEQSA, approval will need to be sought from the Academic Board to prepare a Material Change notification submission to TEQSA before implementing the recommended changes. TEQSA's Material Change Notification Policy states:

> *4. Notifications do not constitute an application for approval to implement changes, as approval is not required. However, TEQSA will follow up if it considers there is a risk that Standards in the HES Framework have been or will be breached.*
>
> *7. Notwithstanding, TEQSA would expect providers to notify TEQSA of the following changes:*
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> - *major course changes (for providers without self-accrediting authority) such as changes to the titles of courses, a notable reduction in course duration or the introduction of new majors or specialisations.*

Minor changes to courses and units that are deemed as continuous improvement, whilst maintaining coherency of the course, only require internal approval by the Dean and/or Deputy Dean.

Any proposal to make changes to an approved higher education course structure, content or delivery, which may constitute a 'material change' requires notification to the external accrediting authority and a potential course change proposal to be approved by the Academic Board.

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 seven years as a general rule, but the interval may be altered by TEQSA.

The Deputy Dean 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 (CAC) to undertake an internal and external review of the courses due for renewal of accreditation. The revised curriculum, once approved by the Academic Board will be forwarded to TEQSA for assessment.

Professional Accreditation

Within Australia, Engineering degree (and vocational programs) are not required to be accredited by a professional institution (such as Engineers Australia) for permission to work or 'practice' (apart

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from certain categories of work in Queensland and signatures for drawings). However, EIT is keen to build further value into the programs by seeking Engineers Australia accreditation as this can give international recognition under the Dublin, Sydney and Washington Accords. In line with TEQSA requirements, EIT will clearly indicate whether a course is provisionally, conditionally or fully accredited by Engineers Australia (and other authorities).

Thus, EIT continues to progress potential professional accreditation with Engineers Australia on a voluntary basis. EIT will also continue to involve Engineers Australia in the course creation and expert assessment processes. From time to time, EIT will seek accreditation from other bodies depending on the relevance to the qualification (e.g. IChemE – Institute of Chemical Engineers). EIT will monitor any possible changes in the future.

End of teaching period strategic review

Each unit and the associated grade distributions are reviewed by the Board of Studies at the completion of each teaching period. The Board of Studies lecturer reports include good practices and areas for improvement for dissemination and action plans.

The Board of Studies also review the student unit satisfaction surveys, collated by the Higher Education Manager, that are collected at the end of each teaching period.

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 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 students and 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 units. When a proposed change removes or replaces core units; affects the credit points; or changes the structure in any way that may affect students, pragmatic transitional arrangements must be prepared to demonstrate that students will not be 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
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.

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Attrition – TEQSA defines attrition as the ratio of first-year higher education commencing students in a year who neither completed nor returned to study in the following year, to the total commencing students in that year.

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 (aka Program) – 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 unit, 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 units 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 is a discrete unit of study and a combination of units make up a course of study.

6.0 Related Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:

- Course Review and Quality Assurance Procedure
- Course Development Policy & Procedure
- Curriculum Change Register
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Benchmarking Policy
- Benchmarking Procedure
- Academic Board Terms of Reference
- Board of Studies Terms of Reference
- Course Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

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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.

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