AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of the University of Tasmania

November 2005
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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2005, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of the University of Tasmania.

This Report of the audit provides an overview, and then details the Audit Panel’s findings, recommendations, affirmations and commendations. A brief introduction to the University of Tasmania (hereinafter in line with auditee usage ‘UTAS’, or ‘the University’) is given in Appendix A; the mission, objectives and values of AUQA are shown in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C. Appendix D defines abbreviations used in this Report.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits on each organisation’s own objectives, together with the MCEETYA National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/mceetyaCop.htm), and other relevant legal requirements or Codes to which the organisation is committed. The major aim of the audit is to consider and review the procedures an organisation has in place to monitor and achieve its objectives. Full details of the AUQA audit process are available in the AUQA Audit Manual (http://www.auqa.edu.au).

On 6 May 2005, UTAS presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, including seven appendices and along with 28 supporting items of documentation. The Audit Panel met on 3 June to consider these materials and others made available by the University on CD and via web access. The Audit Panel’s task was greatly facilitated by the manner in which UTAS provided access to all audit documentation and in particular by its responsiveness in supplying additional documentation upon request in a timely manner.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and Audit Director undertook a preparatory visit to the UTAS Sandy Bay Campus in Hobart on 4 July. During that visit, the Audit Panel’s requests for more information and the proposed program for the Audit Visits were discussed.

The Audit Panel decided to visit partners involved in the offshore delivery of UTAS transnational (TNE) programs in China, Indonesia, and Malaysia. These offshore visits took place in the week of 25-29 July.

The main Audit Visit took place over 1-5 August 2005. A delegation of the Panel visited the Cradle Coast Campus located at Burnie on the northwest coast of Tasmania on the first morning, while the other Panel members undertook a tour of the Sandy Bay Campus that afternoon. The complete Audit Panel spent 2-3 August at the Sandy Bay Campus in Hobart and 4-5 August at the Newnham Campus in Launceston.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with some 370 people during the various Audit Visits, including visits to offshore partner institutions. Sessions were organised for UTAS external Councillors and other external stakeholders drawn from the Tasmanian communities served by the University, senior UTAS management, academic and general staff and postgraduate and undergraduate students. Sessions were also available for any member of UTAS community to meet the Audit Panel and two people took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation at UTAS current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended 5 August 2005 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by UTAS as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to
reach a comprehensive understanding of the University’s activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA’s view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an unsuitable approach, a faulty deployment, or a lack of success in relation to a stated goal, and which in AUQA’s view is particularly significant. They indicate matters in need of attention, possibly with suggestions for action. Where such matters have already been identified by UTAS, with evidence, they are termed ‘affirmations’. A distinctive feature of this Audit Report is the relatively high ratio of affirmations to recommendations, which is a reflection of the thoroughness of the auditee’s self-review.

It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA Audit Reports may have resource implications, and that this can pose difficulties for institutions. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise these recommendations and affirmations, and recognises that it is the responsibility of UTAS to respond in a manner consistent with its local context.

The Audit Panel has structured this Audit Report to reflect the structure of the University’s own Performance Portfolio. The UTAS Performance Portfolio 2005 was: a) organised around a relatively small number of key chapter headings covering broad cognate areas (vis: Governance and Strategic Planning; Teaching and Learning; Research; Staff; Community Engagement; and International); and, b) adopted a standard structure within each of these chapters, based on the UTAS ‘PIRI’ Quality System (Planning/Implementation/Review/Improvement – see section 1.3 for detailed comment on this model).

This arrangement necessitated covering some important enabling systems and processes under the broad report section headings (such as treating ‘student support services’ under Teaching and Learning rather than treating them separately), and also, adoption of the Portfolio’s ‘PIRI’ structure for the organisation of content within each section of the Report. In this respect, it should be noted that AUQA uses the ‘ADRI’ (Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement) model for auditing, and this holds implications for the reporting of audit findings. Sometimes this necessitated the Audit Panel making findings that traverse several PIRI subsection headings. Readers should not assume that a strict one-to-one relationship exists between the PIRI headings as supplied by the auditee in their Portfolio, and the Audit Panel’s ADRI-based findings in this Report.

It should also be noted that in the University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 there are a large number of strategic goals and strategies (39 in total). In the EDGE agenda these are ‘consolidated’ under the headings of ‘Reputation, People, and Position’, rather than under cognate areas (such as teaching and learning, etc). At the start of each main section of this Report therefore, the institutional objectives for that area have usually been indicated through a selection of longer-term goals and relevant performance indicators (PIs). In this way, the Audit Panel has put focus on the quality of the performance outcomes that the institution has set for itself. The exception is in chapter 1, Governance and Strategic Planning, where the University’s Vision and Mission statements are included instead.
CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. It should be noted that other favourable and critical comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

Though founded in Hobart in 1890, making it the fourth oldest university in Australia, in 1991 the University merged with the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology in Launceston to form UTAS as the State’s only university, but one already possessing a century-long tradition as a higher education institution based on teaching and learning informed by research and scholarship.

The Audit Panel considered that there was the potential for a tension developing between the University’s aspirations to be ranked in the top echelon of research-led universities in Australia and gaining recognition as a world leader in specialist areas, and its role as the only university in the state of Tasmania. An instance of the former is UTAS benchmarking its performance against Go8 comparators, and of the latter, is the special relationship with the Tasmanian state government through a Partnership Agreement. The Panel’s overall findings should be considered in this context, including any observations within the Report encouraging UTAS to benchmark itself internally, or internationally against selected institutions of a similar size, vision, location, and profile.

With respect to governance and strategic planning issues, the Audit Panel looked closely at the adoption of the ‘UTAS EDGE agenda’ - that is, the UTAS strategic planning and reporting process developed to ensure that the University can exhibit the characteristics of: Excellence; Distinctiveness; Growth; and Engagement. The Audit Panel concluded that the EDGE agenda had in the main been successfully embedded as part of the UTAS organisational culture, due in part to the leadership provided by senior management and Council. In relation to high-level institution-wide quality processes and systems, the Audit Panel commended UTAS for the early adoption of quality audit methods as an approach to encourage continuous quality improvement, noting that the relatively high ratio of affirmations to recommendations reflects the thoroughness of the auditee’s self-review. However, the Audit Panel concludes that some work is still needed to warrant describing this as a fully implemented ‘Quality System’.

Bearing in mind the institutional priorities for teaching and learning (T&L) that are expressed in the UTAS EDGE agenda, the Audit Panel commended the processes of planning and review being linked to the allocation of performance-based funding. It is also commended for mechanisms designed to support the quality of teaching and learning, including use made of student feedback, teaching recognition schemes, and activities designed to support student access, participation, and transition. The Audit Panel also acknowledged the University’s self-review findings of the need to further embed and evaluate graduate attributes, improve educational development opportunities and some aspects of T&L technology for flexible learning; and the panel recommends that further attention be paid to the induction and training of tutors and sessional staff.

Concerning the University’s research and research training agenda, the Audit Panel commended UTAS for its effective prioritisation of research effort against state and National Research Priorities, and for research training management, including the support provided to PhD students. The Audit Panel also confirmed the University’s recognition of the need to drive the EDGE research agenda further, improve some aspects of the ethics clearance processes, and supports the efforts being made by UTAS to improve the level of research commercialisation, and the need for further efforts to lift its research performance in selected areas.
With respect to staffing issues at UTAS, the Audit Panel commended the University for implementing a performance management system and some well-received management development programs, and confirms the need for further negotiations on achievement of uniform workload models across the University, and introduction of programs designed to improve aspects of equity performance. The Audit Panel also recommends that UTAS review its current approach to the general induction and orientation of staff.

Concerning the UTAS community engagement agenda, the Audit Panel was very positive about the special relationships formed with the Tasmanian Government and some local communities, including the northwest region through the Cradle Coast Campus initiative. However, the panel agreed that more policy work was required to lift the community engagement agenda to a new level, and found that there is a need to engage more effectively with members of the Indigenous community, and to ensure that the University could become more fully engaged with Tasmanian TAFE and schools, especially those schools in locations outside of cities with a UTAS campus presence.

With respect to the UTAS international agenda, the Audit Panel looked at activity both onshore and offshore and concluded that the University deserved commendations for promoting an international dimension to the UTAS student experience, and for focusing future TNE activity on established partnerships with well-regarded institutions overseas. The Audit Panel also commends the rigour of commissioned reviews of TNE activity, and urges management to ensure that the recommendations of these reviews are followed through. In similar vein, the panel recommends that UTAS look closely at the entry and exit levels of English language proficiency of students in its TNE programs.

Finally, the Audit Panel recommends that UTAS should identify ways to more effectively communicate with its constituencies about its TNE program. Towards this end, the Report concludes in a helpful manner to assist UTAS to internationally benchmark its overall institutional performance.

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. Note that these are not prioritised by the Audit Panel. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

**Commendations**

1. AUQA commends UTAS for the inclusive development and wide ownership of the EDGE agenda with evidence of a good planning cascade and the application of strategic funding to advance the agenda. .................................................................9

2. AUQA commends UTAS for the positive and well-regarded leadership by the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management group and the effective role played by Council in the governance of UTAS....................................................................................11

3. AUQA commends UTAS for the early adoption of quality audit and the comprehensive self-review leading up to the AUQA audit..................................................12

4. AUQA commends UTAS for the processes of planning and review related to T&L provision, through mechanisms such as comprehensive and well integrated school and course review processes, and through an increase in the performance based funding of the teaching component of the University’s budget. ............................................................19

5. AUQA commends UTAS for the evident commitment to assuring quality teaching and learning and active consideration of student feedback through the use of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning ‘agreed norm’ in delineating, implementing and reporting improvement strategies in unit teaching and learning. ..................................................20

6. AUQA commends UTAS for the mechanisms in place for supporting, enhancing, and rewarding teaching practice as evidenced from the implementation of the Teaching Development Fund and introduction of the teaching excellence and merit awards. .........................20
7. AUQA commends UTAS for the suite of activities designed to support student access, participation and transition........................................................................................................21

8. AUQA commends UTAS for identifying appropriately themed research areas; the aligning of resources with research priorities, including the link to National Research Priorities, and with the state areas of research strength.................................................................................28

9. AUQA commends UTAS for its research training management system and its mentoring and support of PhD students. ..............................................................................................................29

10. AUQA commends UTAS for the implementation of the well received and effective Orienting Heads and Talking Heads leadership and management development programs for heads of school........................................................................................................33

11. AUQA commends the work UTAS has undertaken in developing and refining the Performance Management System so that it both informs and responds to the performance related aspects of the University’s staff recruitment, probation, promotion, and staff development policies and procedures ........................................................................................................33

12. AUQA commends UTAS for developing positive relationships with City Councils, for the Edge Radio operation, and for the activities of the University Foundation........................................................................................................38

13. AUQA commends UTAS on the very positive engagement with the Tasmanian community including several strong partnerships: A key partnership with the state government; and the development of University activity in the northwest through the Cradle Coast Campus. ..............................................................39

14. AUQA commends UTAS for promoting an international dimension to the student experience. ..............................................................................................................................................42

15. AUQA commends UTAS for negotiating partnerships with some well-regarded offshore partners, including the introduction of the Joint Management Committees to oversee relationship management; and for commissioning the Guthrie and Johnston reviews of TNE operations........................................................................................................................................43

**Affirmations**

1. While noting the intention of UTAS to undertake a progressive implementation of the Council policy framework, AUQA urges the University to complete this in a timely manner and in a way that will assist the further development of the University’s ‘PIRI’ Quality System........................................................................................................................................12

2. AUQA affirms the intention of UTAS to strengthen risk management across the University. ........................................12

3. AUQA affirms UTAS plans to develop a more strategic relationship between the Flexible Education Unit, heads of school and deans...........................................................................................................................................17

4. While noting the work being done to embed and evaluate graduate attributes in certain sections of the University, AUQA observes that progress is variable across the UTAS curriculum and affirms the need for further attention to implementation........................................................................................................................................18

5. AUQA affirms the UTAS initiatives designed to improve the use of videoconferencing in teaching and learning.............................................................................................................................................21

6. AUQA affirms the UTAS decision to strengthen the definition of ‘research active’ and the use of this to drive the EDGE research agenda.................................................................................................27
While noting positively the establishment and operation of the state-wide human research ethics committee for social and medical research (a network of three ethics committees) AUQA affirms that further attention is required in relation to the streamlining of the work of the medical and health ethics committees.

AUQA affirms the University’s intention to fully implement the outcomes of recent reviews of research, research services and research and development commercial services at UTAS.

AUQA affirms the recognition by UTAS of the need to increase the level of research commercialisation activity and industry linkage, but notes that this will require a more active program across the University and related research groups in gaining acceptance of the need for commercialisation.

AUQA affirms the UTAS commitment to develop research activity in specific areas that are currently underperforming, such as Medical and Health-related research, and in Education and Commerce.

AUQA affirms the UTAS decision requiring agreed workload models to be negotiated in all schools by 2006, and encourages the University to ensure that its policy relating to the recognition of TNE teaching in load is fully implemented.

AUQA affirms the UTAS decision to introduce a suite of programs to improve the University’s equity performance; including identifying gender targets for senior academic and management appointments, and Indigenous and NESB students.

AUQA affirms the UTAS intention to finalise and implement the proposed new policy framework for community engagement, to take it to a new level.

In affirming the review activity applied to the TNE operation, AUQA supports UTAS in its progress on and further intentions to implement the recommendations arising from the TNE reviews, but also encourages careful analysis of the advantages and risks of further growth in this sector, including maintaining appropriate entry and exit standards of English language proficiency.

**Recommendations**

1. AUQA recommends that, to ensure the momentum gathered from the self-review activities leading up to the AUQA Audit is not lost, UTAS consider whether to now adopt a more fully-articulated ‘Quality System’, one that extends beyond the current description of the ‘PIRI’ quality improvement loop.

2. AUQA recommends that UTAS pay further attention to the induction and training of tutors and sessional staff across the University.

3. AUQA recommends that, when implementing the actions outlined in Affirmation 3, UTAS pay further attention to addressing the variation in the use of and quality of the web-enhanced teaching across academic organisational units.

4. AUQA recommends that UTAS review its current approach to the general induction and orientation of academic and general staff.

5. AUQA recommends that UTAS investigate opportunities for the University to further develop relationships with the Tasmanian TAFE and schools sectors.
6. AUQA recommends that UTAS pay further attention to involving both Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community in appropriate university curricular and extra-curricular events.

7. AUQA recommends that UTAS identify and implement ways to promulgate information about the University's TNE operation amongst its staff, students, and other stakeholders more effectively.
1 GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following Vision and Mission statements with implications for the University’s approach to quality assurance:

Vision: By 2010, the University of Tasmania will be ranked among the top echelon of research-led universities in Australia. The University will be a world leader in its specialist, thematic areas and will be recognised for its contribution to state and national developments. As Australia’s ‘natural choice for study’ UTAS will be supported by its high-quality academic community, its unique island setting and its distinctive student experience.

Mission: The University of Tasmania is committed to continuing its long tradition of excellence in the creation, preservation, communication and application of knowledge and scholarship that is global in scope, distinctive in its specialisations and reflecting the distinctiveness of Tasmania. The University will provide leadership within its community, contributing to the cultural, economic and social development of Tasmania.

It was clear to the Audit Panel that there was the potential for a tension developing between the University’s aspirations to be ranked in the top echelon of research-led universities in Australia and gaining recognition as a world leader in specialist areas; and its role as the only university in the state of Tasmania, with a remit to address access, participation, and equity issues that the ‘State University’ role entails.

The Audit Panel particularly examined the quality assurance implications of these high level aspirations for the University.

1.1 Planning: the UTAS EDGE Agenda

The Audit Panel investigated how the University of Tasmania has attempted to achieve its vision and mission, while resolving some inherent tensions.

In 2003, after the appointment of the current Vice-Chancellor and a major period of consultation involving staff and external stakeholders of UTAS, a new strategic University of Tasmania Plan was adopted, based on ‘four cornerstones’ for the future development of the University: Excellence; Distinctiveness; Growth; and Engagement – or, what is more commonly referred to within the University as the ‘UTAS EDGE agenda’.

The key elements of the EDGE agenda to be achieved by 2010 are:

- “to be in the top echelon of research universities in Australia, producing research and scholarship that are renowned nationally and internationally
- to enhance its teaching so that it is ranked in the top 10 Australian universities with respect to teaching performance
- to be recognised for its nationally distinctive courses and research in University theme areas (see section 3), and for its initiative in developing new themes in emerging fields in which it has a competitive advantage
- to provide a quality, distinctive and energising student experience that derives from the unique character of Tasmania, and
- to grow and develop to around 15,000 equivalent full-time student units (EFTSU), with a strategically balanced and distinctive enrolment and campus profile with the following indicative targets by 2010: UG 12,400; PG 1,500; RHD 1,100” (PF p3).
To achieve these key outcomes, a total of 39 goals and strategies are identified within the Plan and these are ‘consolidated’ under the headings of ‘Reputation, People, and Position’. The Audit Panel questioned whether 39 strategies might be too many for an organisation to be able to manage effectively, but the Panel was advised that the strategies are subject to classification and prioritisation processes, and often have specific EDGE agenda-funded projects allocated to support their achievement. For example there are 16 ‘longer-term goals’ identified, also consolidated under ‘Reputation People and Position’ and allocated to EDGE agenda dimensions.

To measure whether these goals and strategies are being achieved, collectively the EDGE agenda offers a suite of nine ‘Headline Performance Indicators’ (HPIs) and 18 ‘Operational Performance Indicators’ (OPIs).

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 contains the following statement: “Headline and operational performance indicators will be benchmarked against Go8 universities where appropriate.” The Audit Panel noted that while there was a good range of PIs for the Excellence, Growth, and Engagement dimensions of the EDGE agenda, there was no HPI to gauge performance for ‘Distinctiveness’ and only two of the OPIs related to this dimension. The Audit Panel believes that it would be advantageous for UTAS to identify an appropriate ‘headline performance indicator’ for the ‘Distinctiveness’ dimension of the EDGE agenda. The Panel also noted that within the University of Tasmania Plan neither headline nor operational performance indicators were associated with a date by which they would be accomplished nor was responsibility affixed for their implementation. Further precision may be forthcoming in successive iterations of university-wide planning but was not apparent in the University’s initial efforts in this arena.

Despite concerns about the imbalance in performance indicators and current lack of specificity across its key ‘cornerstone’ dimensions, the Audit Panel found that because of the wide consultation preceding and following its introduction, the EDGE agenda had been well-received by the broad UTAS community and was integrated with the other aspects of the University’s strategic planning process. For example, both the Teaching and Learning Development Plan 2005-2007, and the Research and Research Training Management Plan 2005-2007, and other high-level plans such as associated faculty and school plans and the International Services Plan, are aligned with the strategic context of the EDGE agenda. The Panel was also advised that the University had made the EDGE agenda the framework for its annual budgeting and planning cycle, and the Audit Panel found sufficient evidence to support this claim in the form of the allocation of strategic project funding and performance-based funding allocations.

The Audit Panel concluded that the University had identified a comprehensive set of strategic priorities for which it had set aside a budget pool.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends UTAS for the inclusive development and wide ownership of the EDGE agenda with evidence of a good planning cascade and the application of strategic funding to advance the agenda.

However, the Audit Panel did have a concern about how effectively the planning system relates to what is sometimes described as ‘the UTAS Quality System’ and this issue is examined in section 1.3.

1.2 Implementation: Leadership and the EDGE Agenda

UTAS is now governed by a Council of 18 members (down from 24), eight of whom are external appointees. During the Audit Visit the Panel met with the Chancellor and five of the external members of the UTAS Council in a dedicated session. At the time of the visit, the Council had
begun a process of creating a policy framework intended to clarify roles and responsibilities of each element of the governance structure. The Audit Panel views this as an important initiative with significant implications for the University’s approach to quality assurance, and this is further commented on below.

At the time of the Audit Visit UTAS had an overlapping suite of high-level decision-making bodies, with considerable duplication in membership at the senior executive management level, consisting of:

- the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive (VCE)
- the Senior Management Team (SMT - the VCE, plus deans), and
- the Planning & Resources Committee (the SMT, plus three elected members).

However, during the Audit Visit the Audit Panel was advised that the membership, interrelationship, and meeting schedules of these bodies were in the process of being formally rationalised through the University Council. During the course of the audit the Audit Panel managed to meet with all members of these three bodies, and in sessions with staff and students there was a consistent thread of comment on the positive contribution of the Vice-Chancellor in particular and the executive group in general.

Another important player in the quality agenda at UTAS is Academic Senate. It was noted that the role of Academic Senate was included in the UTAS Performance Portfolio in the ‘Governance and Planning’ section under the ‘implementation’ heading (not in the teaching and learning or research sections), where it is described as having “a significant role in maintaining the academic values and standards of the University” (PF p7).

The Audit Panel observed that the Academic Senate had been subject to a major review in 2003 and at the time of the audit visit the recommendations from that review were still being debated and progressively implemented. The Audit Panel noted that the latest available report suggested that progress was now gathering some momentum, but also noted that the report does not make any resolution on the timeliness of Senate decision-making, and this is now a matter in need of immediate attention. During interviews there was concern expressed about the lengthy meetings of Senate by some interviewees.

Organisational vision, mission, and strategic objectives cannot be successfully embedded within the culture of an organisation unless they enjoy the full support of its key stakeholders and especially the support (whether that is qualified support, or not) of the academic community. During the Audit Visit the Audit Panel discussed the matter with key external stakeholders and academic and general staff from all levels of the University, including representatives of the unions, and with members of the student body. It was clear to the Audit Panel from these interactions and the documentation examined that the ‘UTAS EDGE agenda’ was not only well understood, but on the whole, generally well accepted by the broad UTAS community.

Although a small number of individuals were obviously uninspired by the EDGE agenda (it being dismissed by one interviewee as ‘just management-speak’), the vast majority of UTAS staff and external stakeholders were clearly engaged by it, with students generally being less well informed about detail, but still in the main positive about its strategic directions.

The Audit Panel attributed much of this enthusiasm to the role played by the University’s senior leadership in developing and effectively promoting the EDGE agenda to the key UTAS stakeholder groups. In the interview session with the University’s Chancellor and external members of Council, the Audit Panel also noted the close degree of understanding demonstrated by them about the EDGE agenda, and how well the expert membership of Council matched and reflected the University’s strategic directions.
Commendation 2

AUQA commends UTAS for the positive and well-regarded leadership by the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management group and the effective role played by Council in the governance of UTAS.

1.3 Review and Improvement: the ‘UTAS Quality System’

The two commendations above should not be taken as indicating that the Audit Panel concluded that the University’s thinking about the management of quality cannot be improved. The lack of a ‘Headline Performance Indicator’ for the ‘Distinctiveness’ dimension of the EDGE agenda strategies has already been commented on. Another particular concern of the Panel’s was whether the other planning and performance reporting aspects of the EDGE agenda had been articulated effectively and integrated within the variously titled “UTAS Quality System PIRI” (PF p6) and related quality processes.

The Audit Panel noted that the ‘quality system’ is ambiguously referred to as the ‘UTAS Quality System’ and the ‘PIRI Quality System’. The acronym ‘PIRI’ stands for ‘Planning; Implementation; Review and Improvement’. In the Performance Portfolio it is stated that “UTAS is attempting to embed this (PIRI) quality system in all its processes and roles by using it as a framework for agendas for key committees, all quality assurance processes and in appropriate documents, such as this Portfolio, in which it forms the basis of section headings” (PF p6 – emphasis added).

In noting this it was clear to the Audit Panel that the ‘PIRI’ quality-loop, or ‘framework’ had been indispensable in the University’s self-review, in the development of the Performance Portfolio, and in preparing for the AUQA audit, as described. However it could not (as yet) be called the ‘UTAS Quality System’, but only part of a ‘quality system’.

A critical aspect of a fully-articulated quality system is the allocation of primary management responsibility for the operation of all quality-related policies, and linking these to operational quality processes, and procedures. As noted, the University’s Plan serves stakeholders well as providing a robust framework for decision-making, although the lack of measurable criteria in the form of having specified targets associated with its strategies is an impediment to its full use within a quality system.

As already indicated, the Audit Panel noted that one of the ‘Improvements’ identified in the PIRI-based self-review process was the “Progressive implementation of the Council policy framework” (PF p13) which provided the perfect vehicle to formally allocate such quality responsibilities. The Audit Panel requested and received an up-to-the-minute status report on the implementation of this initiative. The Panel noted that though the intention was to ‘identify policy gaps’ and ‘develop new policies’, and ‘revise delegations for deans, heads of sections/school’, at the time of the Audit Visit, the delegations had only been formally approved by Council down to and including the level of Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) and the Executive Director, Finance and Administration. In the documentation received by the Panel there was no reference to how the initiative contributed to the development of the ‘UTAS Quality System’, nor is the Council policy framework explicitly mentioned in the current description of the quality system.

However, in noting these developments and future intentions, the Audit Panel wishes not only to affirm the direction being taken by UTAS in this particular initiative, but also to alert UTAS senior management to the opportunities that these developments provide for the further development of the ‘UTAS Quality System’.
Affirmation 1

While noting the intention of UTAS to undertake a progressive implementation of the Council policy framework, AUQA urges the University to complete this in a timely manner and in a way that will assist the further development of the University’s ‘PIRI’ Quality System.

Further comment and a recommendation for the further development of the UTAS Quality System follow at section 1.3.2.

Another aspect identified by the University in its self-review (though not in the form of an explicit improvement priority), was the need to pay closer attention to risk management. After audits and reviews performed by the Tasmanian Audit Office, KPMG, and a peer review of the internal audit function in 2004, a series of recommendations had initiated actions designed to roll-out risk management so that it becomes fully embedded in all University operations. Noting that at the time of the audit that the roll-out was not yet complete, the Audit Panel fully supports these developments, but noted that risk management was not mentioned in the University of Tasmania Strategic Plan 2005-2007.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms the intention of UTAS to strengthen risk management across the University.

1.3.1 AUQA Audit Preparations and Self-review

It should be noted that UTAS was a relatively early adopter of the use of AUQA-style external audits, not only to help prepare the University for its scheduled AUQA audit, but also to provide impetus for in-house self-review processes. The first substantial external audit (using AUQA auditors) was conducted in 2002, three years before the University was scheduled for an AUQA audit. The outcomes and follow-up of that audit were reported to Council and Academic Senate. This was complemented by the establishment of a Quality Audit Steering Group to oversee preparations for the AUQA audit.

Then in 2004 the University invited all faculties, schools, research institutes and administrative sections to undertake a self-review using the ‘PIRI’ model. This included the adoption of the AUQA audit methodology for a comprehensive review of the University’s transnational education program (see section 6). The Audit Panel reviewed the resultant self-review documentation in addition to the actual AUQA Performance Portfolio and formed the view that the UTAS preparatory audit and self-review processes were sufficiently authentic and rigorous to deserve commendation.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends UTAS for the early adoption of quality audit and the comprehensive self-review leading up to the AUQA audit.

As already indicated in the Overview of Audit section, a distinctive feature of this Audit Report is the relatively high ratio of affirmations to recommendations, which is a reflection of the thoroughness of the auditee’s self-review. The Audit Panel was also unanimous in its appreciation of the efficient way that UTAS responded to requests for additional information, and the easy electronic access to the Performance Portfolio and supporting documentation provided, itself indicative of a well-developed approach to self-review.
1.3.2 The ‘PIRI’ Quality System

Ironically, it may be that the University’s thorough preparations for the AUQA audit may have inadvertently arrested some other types of development in the University’s quality agenda. For example, it has already been noted in section 1.3 above that not once in any of the documentation requested on site to provide the Audit Panel with up-to-date information about the progressive implementation of the Council policy framework was any reference made to how this important initiative was or could be identified as a key part of the UTAS Quality System.

The Audit Panel noted that the ‘PIRI’ Quality System is only mentioned in the Portfolio five times in total, only two of which are directed at operational aspects: research priorities (PF section 3.2.2); and review of the RRTMP (PF section 3.3.1). Further, the ‘PIRI’ Quality System is not explicitly mentioned in the University’s current plan, or in other high-level plans, such as the Teaching and Learning Development Plan 2005-2007, or the Research and Research Training Management Plan 2005-2007. Indeed, in some sessions the Audit Panel was informed that ‘PIRI’ was not intended to be University-wide, but is still labelled as the ‘UTAS Quality System’.

The lack of reference to the ‘UTAS Quality System’ in the University’s quality planning documentation, and the rather vague responses given by middle-level, junior, and some senior staff to questions about the nature and operation of the ‘Quality System’ indicated to the Audit Panel that (in contrast to the acceptance of the EDGE agenda), the idea of UTAS having an operating ‘Quality System’ is currently not yet fully embedded. It is primarily understood as ‘a catchy acronym’ standing for the quality improvement loop used by the University in its self-review for the AUQA audit.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that on the University’s web site, the ‘UTAS Quality System’ is located on the site titled ‘Quality Audit’ along with the UTAS Performance Portfolio prepared for AUQA. Here a visitor can only access a very brief description of what in reality is just a description of the diagrammatic representation of the ‘PIRI’ quality-loop, and although there is a link to Administrative Reviews, there is no linking to the academic quality monitoring and review processes, nor is there any other schematic representation of a fully-articulated, University-wide ‘Quality System’. Conversely, if one were to access ‘the System’ via the Administrative Reviews web page, there is a reciprocal link-back to the Quality Audit page, but again there is no explicit link or reference to this (or any other) review processes as part of an integrated University-wide quality system.

This apparent deficit, in UTAS not maximising the advantages of its systems thinking, is not commensurate with all the good work done in developing and promoting the EDGE agenda so effectively, and in preparing so efficiently for the AUQA audit, using the PIRI model to layout the Portfolio.

The Audit Panel is conscious of the good work done by University management in promoting the ‘PIRI’ process to the UTAS community as providing a ‘framework’ or quality-loop for continuous quality improvement. The Audit Panel also acknowledges that the work-in-progress on the policy framework is moving towards the allocation of responsibilities and accountabilities to individuals and groups, and that the University has in place a well-developed suite of quality review processes at both the school and course level, and of administrative areas. In addition, through the EDGE agenda the University appears to have successfully adopted the practice of reporting performance against plans.

However, should UTAS wish to describe these at times quite disparate processes as constituting the ‘UTAS Quality System’, the Audit Panel believes that all these quality planning, monitoring and review, and reporting processes (and their outcomes) should be specifically identified as being integrated parts (and providing the outputs) of the system.
Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that, to ensure the momentum gathered from the self-review activities leading up to the AUQA Audit is not lost, UTAS consider whether to now adopt a more fully-articulated ‘Quality System’, one that extends beyond the current description of the ‘PIRI’ quality improvement loop.

The Audit Panel believes that this will provide a more systemic model for the allocation of management responsibilities for quality planning, monitoring, and review policies, processes, and procedures. In addition, the adoption of a more explicitly 'systems' model could well assist the University to implement a more purposeful approach to the “use of data for planning and benchmarking”, an identified improvement priority for Teaching and Learning (PF p34 - see also p24 in section 2).

Further comments on the UTAS approach to benchmarking are also made at pp21-22, p24, p29, and finally in section 6 at pp45-46.
2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 contains 16 longer-term goals, the majority of which in one way or another impact on the Teaching and Learning agenda at UTAS. Key among these for teaching and learning are the goals listed below (EDGE agenda dimension in brackets):

Reputation

*To enhance its teaching so that it is ranked in the top ten Australian universities with respect to teaching performance. (Excellence)*

People

*To provide a quality, distinctive and energising student experience that derives from the unique Tasmanian character. The University of Tasmania will develop life-long learning skills, generic attributes and a global perspective that leads to a highly satisfying and rewarding employment, career and personal development outcomes for students. (Excellence, Distinctiveness)*

*To attract and retain academic and general staff of the highest quality and enable them to pursue the University’s goals with a high degree of support, development and autonomy. Working conditions and remuneration packages will be nationally competitive, with recognition and rewards linked to achievements. (Excellence)*

Position

*To grow and develop to around 15,000 EFTSU, with a strategically balanced and distinctive enrolment and campus profile with the following indicative targets by 2010: UG 12,400; PG 1,500; RHD 1,100. (Growth)*

The Teaching and Learning Development Plan 2005-2007 identifies the following ‘Headline Performance Indicators’ (HPIs) with respect to Teaching and Learning (alignment with EDGE HPIs and relevant dimension(s) of the EDGE agenda in brackets):

1. *Increasing the graduate qualification profile within the Tasmanian workforce to national average (HPI:1 - Growth; Engagement)*
2. *Increasing higher education participation of Tasmanians in Tasmania (to at least the national average) (HPI:2 – Growth; Engagement)*
3. *Enrolling international students at or above the national average as a proportion of all students (HPI:4 - Growth; Engagement)*
4. *Achieving consistently high ratings in the Graduate Destinations Survey and the Course Experience Questionnaire. (HPI:8 – Excellence)*

With the exception of PI number 3 above (ie HPI:4, which is reserved for coverage in section 6), comment on the University’s performance in relation to these HPIs is included below. There were also quite a number of OPIs (11) relevant to Teaching and Learning performance identified in the University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007.

This section on teaching and learning is longer than the other sections of this Report, reflecting the treatment it was given in the UTAS Performance Portfolio, through the incorporation there of issues such as ‘student support services’ under the Teaching and Learning heading. A number of the goals indicated above are also relevant to other sections of this Report such as: Staff; Community Engagement; and, International.
2.1 Planning for the UTAS Teaching and Learning Agenda

The Performance Portfolio states: “As the only university in the State, UTAS has a comprehensive course profile, with nine broad fields of study” (PF p14). These features mean that the University must pay attention to issues of student access, participation, and equity. On the other hand, in the same section the Portfolio also states: “The target for teaching quality is to be among the top 10 Australian universities” (Ibid).

The Audit Panel noted the inherent tension in these statements and further comment is made on this in the Review of Teaching and Learning Performance subsection.

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 provides the basis for planning in teaching and learning (T&L) and this is articulated through the rolling T&L Development Plans as well as in faculty, division, school, and section plans.

Reflecting the structure of the University of Tasmania Plan, the T&L Development Plan 2005-2007 contains a relatively large number of EDGE agenda strategies (24 out of 39 in total), each containing a variable number of ‘Initiatives/Targets/Outcomes’. Each of these planned activities in turn has been allocated a Priority; a person or group with Responsibility (but no committees); a ‘notional’ Budget (see section 2.2.2); and a target due Date (month/year) for completion.

The key T&L priorities associated with the UTAS EDGE agenda can be summarised as follows:

**Excellence**
- develop quality T&L processes, environment and outcomes
- match Go8 profile and reputation
- enhance T&L performance to top 10

**Distinctiveness**
- become an acknowledged leader in key T&L fields
- develop courses tied to Tasmania’s identity and theme areas
- develop a distinctive student experience

**Growth**
- meet the University’s targets for 2010 – growth by:
  - 2% in Hobart
  - 5% in Launceston
  - 13% in the northwest

**Engagement**
- implement collaborative arrangements to meet the State’s educational needs
- build educational access and participation across the State.

See section 2.2.3 for an audit finding relating to the T&L planning process, which also takes into account observations made about its implementation and program and course review outcomes.

2.2 Implementation of the UTAS Teaching and Learning Agenda

A test of the impact of these various T&L planning processes is in the quality of the programs and courses that result from their implementation and the quality of teaching and learning and assessment experienced by the students. The particular dimensions of their implementation noted by the Audit Panel will be reported on below.
2.2.1 Management Structure and Responsibilities

The management structure for the achievement of the University’s T&L mission with respect to quality assurance matters is:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor (T&L) – with University-wide quality assurance responsibilities as Chair of the University’s T&L Committee
- deans and heads of school – with allocated quality assurance responsibilities at the levels of faculty and school
- Associate Deans (T&L) – with quality assurance responsibilities as the chairs of faculty T&L committees, and
- the University T&L Committee (UT&LC) – a key committee of the Academic Senate, responsible for developing policy and assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Recently the UT&LC has increasingly focussed on examining T&L performance.

Finally, there is the Flexible Education Unit (FEU). The FEU was established in 2002 to support T&L through provision of a range of programs and services, including:

- T&L-related staff development – such as ‘TAUT’ (Teaching at the University of Tasmania), a program for all newly-appointed staff without teaching experience; and a Graduate Certificate in University Learning
- supporting sessional teaching staff, and
- supporting flexible teaching and learning – especially the development of quality assurance standards that must be met before units can be made available to students, and the provision of training materials and resources to staff.

The Audit Panel noted that FEU was under review at the time of the Audit Visit and requested and received a progress report on the review’s findings to date. The Audit Panel learned that there had been discussions on the need to change the nature of the working arrangements between FEU and the key T&L organisational units and supports the University’s intention to develop a more strategic relationship between the FEU and schools and faculties.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms UTAS plans to develop a more strategic relationship between the Flexible Education Unit, heads of school and deans.

2.2.2 Aligning Resources to T&L Priorities

As indicated above, each T&L initiative activity appears to have been allocated a ‘notional’ budget. In reality, a large proportion of these activities (44 out of 75 activities) are designated as having ‘no specific budget – (funded) from within current resources’.

Notwithstanding the above, in 2004 and 2005 both the allocation of strategic funds and performance-based funding has been introduced to support T&L projects that service EDGE priorities, as follows:

- Teaching Development Funds for new course development to support growth, especially in theme areas and postgraduate coursework (a target area for growth)
- the establishment of a Graduate School to support a university-wide approach to postgraduate coursework offerings (also a target area for growth)
- an Academic Development Project at the Cradle Coast Campus to assist faculties/schools plan new course developments in the northwest, and
- upgrades of teaching infrastructure.

In addition, the introduction of performance-based funding of teaching saw the allocation of 1% of the University’s total teaching budget to schools based on their teaching performance across several performance indicators in 2004, increased to 3% in 2005. Performance indicators include Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) results; Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning outcomes; student progress parameters; and completion rates. From 2005 too, an additional 1% has been allocated to faculties based upon performance against agreed criteria, making 4% in all for performance based funding of teaching.

See section 2.2.3 for an audit finding relating also to the T&L budget allocation process.

### 2.2.3 Quality of Programs and Courses

An important dimension of the question of course quality is the nature of the learning outcomes that are to be achieved by the graduates of the courses of study that are taught. To that end, in 2001 the University adopted a policy on Generic Skills of Graduates, and in the Portfolio it was stated there have since been ‘several initiatives aimed at raising awareness of ways in which the graduate attributes can be incorporated within the curriculum’ (PF p23).

Among these were the resources developed by FEU to support academics in this area. The 2004 Teaching Excellence Award-winning projects: Science Communications Skills Project - ‘Scribble and Babble’; and the Software Engineering Project were cited as examples.

While noting the undoubted value of these initiatives in the relevant science and technology disciplines, and noting evidence of embedding of graduate attributes in documentation provided in nursing, from interviews with staff and students, the Audit Panel formed the view that progress in achieving the embedding of graduate attributes in curricula across UTAS was uneven.

**Affirmation 4**

While noting the work being done to embed and evaluate graduate attributes in certain sections of the University, AUQA observes that progress is variable across the UTAS curriculum and affirms the need for further attention to implementation.

The UTAS Performance Portfolio also highlighted the course approvals and course review processes as being the main ways of providing quality assurance for programs and courses. The Audit Panel reviewed the course approvals process and requested sample course approval document trails and was satisfied with the evidence it reviewed.

The Audit Panel noted the existence of a ‘Teaching and Learning Quality Manual’ that sets out in detail the procedures for school and course reviews, and that the UT&LC maintains a register to ensure that schools and courses are reviewed at the required intervals. The Panel observed that the review schedule is sensitive to the timing of any external accreditation review processes (eg professional accreditation), unless there is a reason for this not to be so. On the evidence available to it the Audit Panel concluded that the review process is sound in focussing attention on issues of the quality of teaching and learning (see also the supporting comments and findings in section 2.2.5).

It was evident to the Audit Panel that under the leadership of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) UTAS had put in place an effective planning and review regime for teaching and learning. The commendation that follows is in recognition of the way in which the various T&L
planning and review processes have been harmonised and performance linked into the budgeting process.

Commendation 4
AUQA commends UTAS for the processes of planning and review related to T&L provision, through mechanisms such as comprehensive and well integrated school and course review processes, and through an increase in the performance based funding of the teaching component of the University’s budget.

2.2.4 Quality of Students
In the Performance Portfolio the following activities are listed as ways in which the University has attempted to ensure that it is attracting high-quality students:

- recruitment/schools programs, including the UTAS ‘student ambassadors’ program and the UTAS E-Team & TasSTAR program
- High Achievers Program for school/college students, including the recognition of achievement in this program in the Tasmanian Certificate of Education; and in the northwest
- the Cradle Coast Campus programs, for example the successful University Preparatory Program offered from there.

In addition there is a significant UTAS scholarship program to attract and retain quality students within Tasmania and to attract well qualified students from the mainland states. The Audit Panel also noted that in line with its partnership agreement with the Tasmanian Government, UTAS had developed an agreement with TAFE Tasmania to improve articulation and credit transfer between students studying in VET programs and UTAS accredited awards. A check of DEST ‘Basis of Admission’ data for 2003-2004 showed the percentage of students who have articulated from TAFE at UTAS to be very close to the national averages over that period, though above the rate achieved at all but one of the Go8 universities.

Though some concerns were expressed about unfavourable comparisons between ENTER scores required for entry into some UTAS courses against Go8 comparators, the Audit Panel considered that taking into account the ‘State University’ role, UTAS is being reasonably effective in these initiatives. Given the articulation agreement with TAFE Tasmania, the performance against national average in TAFE student articulation suggests that UTAS should continue to monitor its performance in this respect.

There is also commentary and findings with respect to aspects of the TAFE and schools’ programs and the Cradle Coast Campus, largely from the perspectives of external stakeholders, in section 5.

2.2.5 Quality of Teaching
To investigate the review of quality of teaching and learning and courses processes in action, the Audit Panel reviewed the use made of Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) results at the unit-of-study level. Here it was observed that units that report results which fall under an ‘agreed norm’ (for example any unit that recorded 2.9 or below on a five point Likert scale for ‘overall satisfaction’) are identified as requiring attention, and the unit coordinator is requested to provide a report, which goes through the head of school to the PVC (T&L).

SETL unit means are also used in performance funding allocations, and for teaching improvement funding opportunities where SETL and CEQ results are poor. They are also included within annual course review reports of the outcomes of strategies implemented to
improve SETLs where they had fallen below the agreed norm. In addition to the use of SETL, the Audit Panel noted that the 2004 self-review revealed that some schools also hold “student forums or focus groups where students can raise issues of concern” (PF p24).

The Audit Panel reviewed the reporting of SETL results and investigated both staff and student experience of using the feedback provided by the SETL system, and concluded that UTAS is being effective in using formal student feedback systems of this nature to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

**Commendation 5**

*AUQA commends UTAS for the evident commitment to assuring quality teaching and learning and active consideration of student feedback through the use of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning ‘agreed norm’ in delineating, implementing and reporting improvement strategies in unit teaching and learning.*

In addition to the work of the FEU commented on in section 2.2.1, the Performance Portfolio also included the following as evidence of UTAS ensuring the quality of teaching and learning activities:

- rewarding excellence in teaching & learning through the early introduction of the Teaching & Learning Excellence Awards in 1991 and Teaching Merit Certificates in 1994
- the relatively high incidence of academic staff being promoted on the basis of their teaching performance
- the funding of T&L improvement initiatives from the Teaching Development Fund, and other incentives, and
- the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning through the introduction of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) student feedback system in 1994.

The Audit Panel concluded that when considered in combination, all these aspects of the T&L quality framework have been effective in enhancing the quality of teaching at UTAS.

**Commendation 6**

*AUQA commends UTAS for the mechanisms in place for supporting, enhancing, and rewarding teaching practice as evidenced from the implementation of the Teaching Development Fund and introduction of the teaching excellence and merit awards.*

Notwithstanding this positive finding, in section 2.4 the Audit Panel also makes a recommendation on the need for UTAS to pay more attention to the needs of part-time sessional and inexperienced teachers.

### 2.2.6 Quality of Student Experience

In the section of the Performance Portfolio headed ‘Ensuring quality of student experience’ (PF p24), the following initiatives were mentioned as serving this objective:

- tertiary literacy workshops
- enabling programs such as UniStart and BioStart, and the University Preparatory Program at the Cradle Coast Campus
- the First Year Experience project
• Peer Mentor Schemes
• library upgrades such as the Learning Hubs
• equity initiatives and supporting students with grievances
• supporting academic integrity, and
• the establishment of the Services for Students Management Committee.

Both students and staff spoke enthusiastically about the impact that these initiatives and other initiatives had to improve the quality of student life at UTAS, and though the higher education participation rate for Tasmania is low by national standards, it was noted that student attrition figures at UTAS have started to improve. On balance, the Audit Panel felt that these initiatives were worthy of commendation as they assist the University to achieve its EDGE agenda objectives for Growth and Engagement.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends UTAS for the suite of activities designed to support student access, participation and transition.

2.2.7 Quality of Teaching Infrastructure

As noted in section 2.4, teaching infrastructure was identified by UTAS in its self-review as a general area in need of improvement, the specific aspects identified for improvement are:

• library acquisitions
• teaching spaces
• computer access
• videoconferencing
• support for online teaching
• group and individual study places, and
• student information management systems.

Sessions with both students and staff, and campus observations confirmed these self-review findings and the Audit Panel urges the University to attend to all these aspects of teaching infrastructure. Of these, probably the one aspect most consistently mentioned by interviewees as being in need of attention, and one of the target areas identified by FEU for immediate attention is the quality of videoconferencing classes between the Hobart and Launceston campuses.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms the UTAS initiatives designed to improve the use of videoconferencing in teaching and learning.

The Audit Panel noted the range of support services provided by the Library which contribute to the teaching and learning and research agendas. The range of reviews of the Library that had been conducted (administrative review, student and staff surveys, Rodski customer satisfaction survey) was noted positively, as well as the benchmarking which had been undertaken. Benchmarking had resulted in substantial additional funding being allocated for acquisitions from 2003. The Rodski survey demonstrated that the Library was performing above the median in all areas in comparison to other Australian university libraries. Perusal of the Implementation Plan following the Library administrative review revealed that satisfactory progress is also being made.
With respect to another dimension of activity, a review of business processes in 2003 identified shortcomings in the University’s student information management system. The Audit Panel was made aware of the actions arising out of that review including the recasting of the University’s approach to enhancing the student experience from an administrative perspective, redesigning its processes for the management of course and unit information, and establishing a single database as the repository for course and unit information which has interfaces to other corporate systems, and other actions designed to support compliance with HESA.

2.3 Review of Teaching and Learning Performance

The Audit Panel was acutely aware of the potential for tension between the University’s desire to be recognised for the excellence of its teaching and learning performance (and related scholarship), and the role of UTAS as the ‘State University’.

With respect to the first of these expectations, it was evident from the ‘Review’ subsection of the chapter on T&L in the Performance Portfolio, and associated documentation, that UTAS is actively benchmarking its T&L performance against the mainland Go8 institutions, and against national averages, using measures such as nationally recognised CEQ results. At the same time, to address expectations arising from the ‘State University’ role, UTAS has committed itself to pursuing a strong enrolment growth strategy that involved meeting ‘stretch targets’ for the enrolment of suitably qualified Tasmanians, attracting well-performing school leavers from the mainland, while at the same time anticipating substantial growth in the recruitment of international students both onshore and transnational.

It was noted for example that the University had been successful in putting a case to the federal government to be allocated substantial additional funded places to 2008.

It was observed that the UTAS CEQ scores and various student progress and completions measures included in the Performance Portfolio, if not outstanding, were entirely satisfactory when compared with Go8 norms. It was also noted that the latest available (2004) CEQ results were slightly down on the previous year’s performance and were now very close to the national averages.

Adjusted CEQ, progress, attrition and student destination data appeared in tables of ‘Student Outcome Indicators for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund’ (LTPF), which were being prepared by DEST at the time of the Audit Visit, suggesting less satisfactory outcomes. One of the more contentious aspects of the LTPF is the use of adjusted performance measures in LTPF calculations.

This comes at a time when the participation rate by Tasmanian school leavers has declined, partly because of demographics, and partly because of the effects of a ‘split cohort’ coming through the Tasmanian schooling system, and this is also at a time when the University is trying to increase its first year school leaver entry scores because of concerns about the comparative entry standard levels against mainland Go8 universities. Given the operation of the LTPF, the Panel posited that it may not necessarily be to the University’s advantage to judge its T&L performance only against the given Go8 benchmarks. See section 6 for further suggestions on approaches to benchmarking against aspirations.

These observations are made to illustrate the sort of policy tensions facing UTAS as it attempts to achieve its various EDGE agenda targets – in this case the simultaneous achievement of Excellence (T&L HPI:4) with Growth and Engagement (T&L HPIs 1,2,&3). The challenge for UTAS now is to tailor the adopted T&L strategies to meet changing circumstances.

However, in gathering the evidence on the quality of teaching and learning at UTAS, the Audit Panel also heard some negative comments from some interviewees about the quality of their
experience as students, which had not been addressed previously. Comment on this type of feedback follows.

2.4 **Teaching and Learning Improvements**

In the T&L section of the Performance Portfolio the following were identified by the University as areas in need of improvement:

- teaching infrastructure;
- the student experience;
- planning to meet growth targets;
- the use of data for planning and benchmarking, and
- quality assurance of TNE programs (PF pp33-34).

With the exception of the last-listed, which will also be covered in section 6, all these topics have already either been affirmed or otherwise commented on in this Report.

In relation to other aspects of ‘the student experience’, in its interactions with both students and teachers during the Audit Visits, the Audit Panel became aware of some disenchantment with the unevenness of the quality of teaching and learning experienced across different areas of the UTAS curriculum in relation to some other aspects of T&L that had not been identified by the University in its self-review and these are dealt with in the paragraphs below. This omission points to the need for the University to consider avenues that are alternative to course questionnaires to gather feedback from current students, such as focus groups.

The high-regard held for the T&L professional development work of the FEU has already been commented upon above, however the nature of much of the negative feedback indicated to the Panel that further attention needs to be paid by the University to two specific areas: the induction and training of teachers, especially inexperienced teachers and tutors; and reducing the variability of web-enhanced teaching, materials and their delivery.

**Recommendation 2**

**AUQA recommends that UTAS pay further attention to the induction and training of tutors and sessional staff across the University.**

With respect to the variability of web-enhanced teaching, materials and their delivery, noting that FEU had already in place a set of quality assurance standards for the development of such materials, the Audit Panel concluded that the problems are more to do with unevenness in the way that these materials are being used across different organisational units.

**Recommendation 3**

**AUQA recommends that, when implementing the actions outlined in Affirmation 3, UTAS pay further attention to addressing the variation in the use of and quality of the web-enhanced teaching across academic organisational units.**

Another ‘student experience’ area identified from feedback related to the experience of some Indigenous students studying at UTAS.

Aboriginal students interviewed by panel members indicated that they experience a ‘separateness’ at the University in their classes and in the provision of support services through the University's Riawunna program. While such perceptions are not unusual, they are noteworthy for the
University, especially since Riawunna staff indicated that services to Aboriginal students are excellent. Students indicated that Riawunna services are located too far from the centre of the Sandy Bay Campus to be accessed conveniently. Students also suggested that this Centre is frequently locked and that the computer room lacks updated equipment and supplies, especially paper for printing. They also indicated that Aboriginal community experts are not invited to campus to share their knowledge of indigenous culture in Aboriginal Studies units or in other allied course areas (see also section 5.4).

Finally, with respect to improving ‘the use of data for planning and benchmarking’, the UTAS Performance Portfolio states that “Some Schools are benchmarking with School- or discipline-level comparators, but most Schools are at the early stages of implementing benchmarking in a systematic way” (PF p30). It was noted here that some administrative units such as FEU, the Library and Assets Management Services were singled out for undertaking effective benchmarking.

It was then acknowledged that “(a)s the access to and sophistication of use of data are improved, there will be more opportunities for the University as a whole and for Schools and Faculties to benchmark against comparators” (PF p34).

A more comprehensive suggestion relating to benchmarking for UTAS to consider will be found in the final paragraphs of section 6 – International.
3 RESEARCH

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following longer-term goals explicitly relevant to the research agenda at UTAS (EDGE agenda dimension in brackets):

**Reputation**

To be in the top echelon of research universities in Australia, producing research and scholarship that are renowned nationally and internationally. (Excellence)

**People**

To develop strategic partnerships and consortia programs with key national and global universities and research institutes to further strengthen theme areas. (Excellence, Distinctiveness)

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 also includes the following performance indicators which explicitly refer to research and research training (type and number of EDGE PI and relevant dimension(s) of the EDGE agenda in brackets):

1. Achieving top-ten status and improving ranking in all recognised research performance indicators (HPI:7 - Excellence)
2. Research higher degree enrolment and completion rates, particularly by theme areas (OPI:7 – Excellence; Distinctiveness)
3. Income generated through (inter alia):
   - Research Development Office, and
   - Commercialisation of innovation (OPI:14 – Engagement; Growth).

It should be noted, that unlike the UTAS Teaching and Learning Development Plan 2005-2007, the UTAS Research and Research Training Management Plan (RRTMP) 2005-2007 does not include a listing of relevant EDGE HPIs and OPIs for research-related activities. Instead, it includes a set of goals for ‘Reputation, People and Position’ drawn from the University Plan (2004-2006), and actual performance figures and tables for research and research training at UTAS (2002-2003), including national benchmarking of research performance.

3.1 Planning for the UTAS Research Agenda

Using the EDGE terminology, research at UTAS aims for:

- Excellence – focus on centres of excellence and quality research
- Distinctiveness – focus on thematic areas of research
- Growth – major growth in research higher degree (RHD) load and research income, and
- Engagement – commitment to significant partnerships in research, alignment to the needs of Tasmania, while setting standards that are international (PF p35).

In the preamble to the RRTMP 2005-2007, it states: “The EDGE Agenda is an ambitious, exciting and challenging agenda. It seeks to move overall research performance of UTAS so that it is closer to the Go8 by 2010, in both per capita and absolute terms, than to any other university” (p2).
The University has again set itself a clear expectation of performing to Go8 benchmarks in research and research training, as it has for teaching and learning. The Audit Panel agrees with the University that this is an ambitious and challenging agenda.

The Audit Panel notes that faculty and other plans are increasingly being aligned with the University RRTMP and agrees that this will be an essential component of achieving the ambitious goals in the EDGE agenda. Research intensity will be an important component of achieving the Go8 aspiration, but this will need to be managed in a way that does not reduce the focus and concentration of research on areas of excellence that fit with the engagement theme in the EDGE agenda.

The RRTMP 2005-2007 also includes an “environmental scan” for the period of the life of the plan of the research and research training environments at the state, national, and international levels. At the state level the need for “mutually beneficial collaborative arrangements” between Tasmanian research organisations and the adoption of a deliberate strategy by UTAS “to align much of its research with major industries of the State” (p6) are highlighted.

At the national level, the need for UTAS to be more competitive in the postgraduate (PG) market is stressed, noting that “the University growth target of a 60% increase (in RHD) by 2010 is a very substantial one which will require significant efforts at all levels of the institution”, and also “(t)he pressure on universities to commercialise their IP” (p7). Finally, at the international level, the scan notes that “(t)here will be moves to develop strategic inter-institutional alliances with similar Universities overseas, for example, the University of Vermont in the USA” (p7). (See also section 6.)

3.2 Implementation of the UTAS Research Agenda

Faculty plans identify the major elements of the University Plan and the RRTMP that relate most clearly to their activities. Below the level of faculty, it was noted that greater integration of plans was identified as an area of planned improvement in the external audit of 2002. The self-review also found that there was “a lack of capacity in research planning at School level whereas research planning at Institutes is well developed” and that consequently “in late 2004, the Research College Board offered mentoring assistance to Schools in constructing research plans” (PF p35).

The Audit Panel notes that the effectiveness of this approach is somewhat patchy with more work to be undertaken in some faculties, as indicated in Affirmation 10 at the end of section 3.4.

Responsibility for implementation of the UTAS research agenda lies with the PVC (Research) and the Research College Board, which is a committee of Academic Senate. In 2005 the Dean of Graduate Research position was made full-time to further the RHD growth strategy, while each faculty has “a research committee, or equivalent, and an Associate Dean (Research) or equivalent” (PF p37).

The key to achievement of the Excellence and Distinctiveness dimensions of the UTAS research agenda lies in the adoption of a thematic approach that capitalises on areas of comparative advantage for UTAS and which are consistent with both state and national research priorities, such as the National Research Priority Areas and the CSIRO Flagship program; this will need to be undertaken while also ensuring research intensity across the institution in line with the Go8 or other institutional aspirations.

The RRTMP 2005-2007 identifies the following six areas of research concentrations, and plans for their development:

- Antarctic and Marine Studies
• Community, Place and Change
• Environment
• Frontier Technologies
• Population and Health, and
• Sustainable Primary Production.

Of these, the last-listed is overwhelmingly the largest, both in terms of the proportion of total grants (36%), and of income earned (50%), followed by the second last (19%) and (21%) respectively. It was noted that two UTAS research institutes are involved across a number of these areas: the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR - 4/6); and the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI - 3/6). They are particularly effective in linking with the strategic themes.

The research partnership with the Tasmanian Government which ensures that the Boards have members from the state government, industry and the University, has worked well, and offers a sound governance framework for further growth in research. The partnership has the advantage of involving one state and one university, with the reduction in competition and complexity that arises in other states.

It was noted that in 2004 approximately 88% of UTAS research income was in these six theme areas, and that the theme areas are advanced by:

• Funding via the university’s research performance allocation;
• Strategic investments
• Allocation of scholarships, and
• Internal research-grant funding.

With respect to the performance of individual researchers, the Audit Panel noted that up until 2004 the standard McKinnon-Walker (2000) benchmarking definition was applied, classifying 74% of UTAS academic staff as ‘research active’. However, in 2004 the Research College Board considered a more stringent definition of ‘research active’ as being researchers who satisfy two out of the three McKinnon-Walker criteria, and that by this standard only 50% of UTAS staff would be defined as research-active. At the time of the writing of the Performance Portfolio the introduction of this higher standard was being discussed. The Audit Panel supports UTAS in this initiative to further the drive for Excellence in research among its active staff.

The University has a well developed system for allocating at least some of its funding to faculties in accordance with research performance. This has worked well in driving and rewarding research in the past. The Audit Panel notes that this approach will be extended with the results of the initial Research Quality exercise being used to allocate some of the Commonwealth block research funding in 2006.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms the UTAS decision to strengthen the definition of ‘research active’ and the use of this to drive the EDGE research agenda.

With respect to research ethics, in 2002 the University and the state government announced an Australian first in the establishment of the Tasmanian state-wide Human Research Ethics Committee as a ‘network’ with three ethics committees, namely the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Northern Tasmania Health and Medical HREC and the Southern Tasmania Health and Medical HREC.
The Audit Panel noted that this network of committees deals only with research proposals in the social science and medical sciences, and that there is also an Animal Ethics Committee. After interviews with researchers in both fields, the Audit Panel was of the view that the social sciences committee is functioning extremely well, as is the Animal Ethics Committee, but believes that there is still further work to be done to improve and streamline the operation of the medical and health side.

**Affirmation 7**

While noting positively the establishment and operation of the state-wide human research ethics committee for social and medical research (a network of three ethics committees) AUQA affirms that further attention is required in relation to the streamlining of the work of the medical and health ethics committees.

This finding is taken up again in relation to Affirmation 10 in terms of improving UTAS research performance in these areas. The Audit Panel also makes the observation that having an efficient and effective ethics process necessarily impacts on enhancing research performance in these areas.

### 3.3 Review of Research and Research Training Performance

With respect to research performance, the Audit Panel noted that with the exception of some failure to attract sufficient industry and other funding (see section 3.4), and total publications, UTAS is performing well against the selected ‘top 10’ national research performance benchmarks on a per capita basis. At the time of the Audit Visit most areas of research performance were trending up. The Audit Panel noted that RHD load and completions (2004) were below the expected EDGE agenda targets. The positive trends indicate that the strategies put in place by UTAS to encourage research concentration across the themed areas are working.

**Commendation 8**

AUQA commends UTAS for identifying appropriately themed research areas; the aligning of resources with research priorities, including the link to National Research Priorities, and with the state areas of research strength.

The University of Tasmania has a well developed approach to research training, including the allocation of funding for scholarships, the selection of appropriate students, and the provision of support and resource information about the stages of candidature. Induction programs are available at all campuses. Student research plans are reviewed annually, with the Dean of Graduate Research taking an active ‘case management’ role where difficulties become apparent. Supervisors are registered, with new supervisors being mentored into the role through initial appointment as co-supervisors. The effectiveness of these approaches to improving research training is demonstrated in the Performance Portfolio through the reduction in withdrawals from the PhD program, and the number of RHD completions per staff member. The Audit Panel met many research students, and the information confirmed a high level of satisfaction with their support and access to resources.

In summary, with respect to research training performance, the Audit Panel was well disposed to what it learned of the way that UTAS PhD students are now being supported in their training and of the good mentoring of the majority of these students are experiencing, as evidenced by the University paying attention to weaknesses identified in both the PREQ and a range of internal research training surveys. Access to central research facilities for students is good, and students interviewed were very positive about their experiences.
Commendation 9
AUQA commends UTAS for its research training management system and its mentoring and support of PhD students.

3.4 Research and Research Training Improvement

In the light of the opportunities provided to UTAS through its position as the only university in the state, the Panel was somewhat surprised to find comparatively little industry involvement in research and comparatively little commercialisation activity. Despite the strong alignment with TIAR, TAFI, and the Antarctic CRC, those interviewed still tended to see their role in research as public good and not commercial. The University of Tasmania has identified the need for improved interactions with industry and commercialisation, and the Panel strongly affirms that these opportunities be taken up. The Panel noted that there were several reviews relating to research support and commercialisation, but the implementation of the recommendations from these reviews were not obvious to the Panel.

Affirmation 8
AUQA affirms the University’s intention to fully implement the outcomes of recent reviews of research, research services and research and development commercial services at UTAS.

With respect to the research activity in schools it was noted that there is significant reliance on the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology for research performance. Approximately one-third of the schools/institutes contribute 75% of external research income.

This figure, when coupled with the relatively poor ‘industry and other’ funding performance and the observations that led to the Affirmation immediately above, confirmed for the Audit Panel that further attention is required by UTAS to improve commercialisation and industry linking activity across the University, as identified in the self-review.

Considering the likely requirement for all Australian universities to have improved measures of research impact under the Research Quality Framework, it became apparent from the discussions with the Audit Panel that considerable conservatism remains among many of the UTAS researchers and the research partners about the role of commercial activities, particularly in fields which many feel create public good (Fisheries, Antarctic etc). The Panel also noted the somewhat ambiguous information relating to commercialisation as the Portfolio states that a recent international universities benchmarking exercise had rated commercialisation at UTAS at ‘4/5’ (with 5 as excellent - PF p54), whereas both the self-review and interviews with senior management identified it as an area in need of improvement.

Affirmation 9
AUQA affirms the recognition by UTAS of the need to increase the level of research commercialisation activity and industry linkage, but notes that this will require a more active program across the University and related research groups in gaining acceptance of the need for commercialisation.

The EDGE agenda which includes a goal of being in the top 10 universities in Australia implies benchmarking with the Go8. The development of the Research Quality Index together with the ongoing operation of the ‘ABACUS’ software program for national research benchmarking developed at UTAS will be an important component of benchmarking against either Go8 or other comparators.

Finally, with respect to improving UTAS research performance, and noting the University’s ambitions to achieve ‘top-ten status and improving rankings in all recognised research
performance indicators’, the Audit Panel examined the RRTMP 2005-2007 and noted under ‘Reputation’ that there are a number of Initiative/Targets included to encourage the achievement of improved performance outcomes in the Health and Medical Sciences, one or two related to Commerce, but hardly anything specifically for Education.

The Audit Panel noted that approximately $3 million has been made available in 2005 for strategic purposes. A small amount of this funding has been allocated to the strategic theme of Population and Health which is a step toward improving research in the Health and Medical Science areas.

The Audit Panel noted that the Portfolio stated that “a strategy for increasing health-related research is being developed … (similarly)…performance in Commerce and Education has been targeted for improvement” (PF p42). The Panel confirms the University’s self-review finding that it needs to lift research performance in some currently underperforming areas if it is to keep pace with its chosen Go8 benchmarks.

Affirmation 10

AUQA affirms the UTAS commitment to develop research activity in specific areas that are currently underperforming, such as Medical and Health-related research, and in Education and Commerce.
4 STAFF

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following longer-term goals explicitly relevant to the staffing agenda at UTAS (EDGE agenda dimension in brackets):

People

To attract and retain academic and general staff of the highest quality and enable them to pursue the University’s goals with a high degree of support, development and autonomy. Working conditions and remuneration packages will be nationally competitive, with recognition and rewards linked to achievements. (Excellence)

To continually improve the University’s organisational culture of openness and equity with efficient, transparent and consultative decision-making. (Engagement)

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following PIs which explicitly refer to staff (type and number of EDGE PI and relevant dimension(s) of the EDGE agenda in brackets):

1. Number of staff by level and gender promoted or transferred in the past three years and the number of internal and external secondments (HPI:6 - Excellence)
2. Number of staff undertaking staff development, secondment and exchange activities (OPI:10 – Excellence; Engagement)
3. Proportion and level of people employed in EO target groups (OPI:12 - Engagement)
4. Performance against staff profile plans (OPI:16 – Growth).

Though ‘People’ is one of the three distinctive areas selected by UTAS to help frame and consolidate its longer-term strategic goals (the other two being ‘Reputation’ and ‘Position’), UTAS does not have a separate staffing or human resources plan in its suite of University-wide plans. Instead, staffing issues are addressed within the University of Tasmania Plan and the plans for Teaching and Learning, and Research.

4.1 Planning for the UTAS Staffing Agenda

Despite the absence of a dedicated staffing plan, the Performance Portfolio indicates that policies on staffing are developed through a range of principal University committees, ‘which are chaired by senior officers, to ensure a consistent approach throughout the University, and have responsibilities in relation to employment’ (PF p56). These being (senior officer in brackets):

- Equal Opportunity Committee (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC))
- Staff Development Committee (DVC)
- Occupational Health & Safety Committee (Executive Director, Finance & Admin.)
- Selection Committees for Levels D&E (DVC)
- University Promotion Committee (DVC), and
- Performance Pay Moderation Committee (DVC).

The Audit Panel observed from a risk management perspective that the DVC is critically important to the staffing agenda at UTAS, and that the DVC was also required to attend a large number of committee meetings that require frequent and extensive travelling between UTAS campuses. In the research section of the Portfolio, the Audit Panel also noted that when the Dean
of Graduate Research was absent in 2004, participation in the Generic Skills workshops reduced to 43% of the former level. This combination of factors raised some important human resources planning questions about sustainability and succession planning at UTAS, and without making a formal recommendation to adopt a staffing plan the Panel draws this observation to the attention of UTAS senior management for consideration.

4.2 \textit{Implementation of the UTAS Staffing Agenda}

From the documentation and interviews the Audit Panel learned that recruitment, selection, promotion, staff development, and performance management procedures had been revised and approved from 2001-2003, and that UTAS had devised some University-wide appointment and performance management principles based on merit. These areas are commented upon below. On the other hand, it was evident from the Portfolio that “(t)he prime responsibility for induction was set at the School/Section level, with an induction folder and booklet designed specifically for this purpose” (PF p57).

The Audit Panel reviewed the contents of the induction kits prepared for both academic and general staff. Although quite extensive, they were essentially a collection of pre-existing UTAS documents, rather than being specifically designed for the purpose of orientation, with information available to staff on a ‘how to’ guide basis. University-wide induction/orientation seminars are also offered twice per year, but the Audit Panel noted that in 2004 less than 40% of new staff had participated in these programs, and neither had the University yet introduced an online induction/orientation program.

Taking these factors into account, but mainly on the basis of speaking with both experienced and recently appointed staff, from across a range of different organisational units, the Audit Panel concluded that the staff experience of induction/orientation was uneven across the University, and is an area that could be improved.

\textbf{Recommendation 4}

\textbf{AUQA recommends that UTAS review its current approach to the general induction and orientation of academic and general staff.}

On the other hand, the Audit Panel reviewed the ‘Induction Materials for Transnational UTAS Staff’ prepared by the FEU and used in conjunction with the running of induction workshops with the relevant schools as an example of a tailored induction program prepared for a specific purpose. The Audit Panel found the materials to be appropriately developed for that purpose and there is further comment on this induction program in section 6.

The Audit Panel also learned that following a finding of the 2002 external audit of the need to improve the provision of leadership and management programs, a special induction program for heads of school/section was introduced in 2004, as part of a revised leadership and management program for the heads of organisational units. The core components of this program were:

- Orienting Heads Program - (referred to above), and
- Talking Heads Program – with focus on topical leadership issues.

The participating heads of organisational units who the Audit Panel interviewed were extremely positive about their experiences, and the structure and content of the programs were viewed as highly appropriate.
Commendation 10

AUQA commends UTAS for the implementation of the well received and effective Orienting Heads and Talking Heads leadership and management development programs for heads of school.

4.3 Review of Staffing Performance

The Audit Panel learned that UTAS has been operating a common Performance Management System for both academic and general staff since 2000 following a trial in the second half of 1999. The performance management process and documentation were substantially revised and simplified following external review in 2001. The Audit Panel noted that the review of each staff member’s performance is directly linked to incremental progression, academic probation and performance pay.

Performance reviews also inform the following processes: academic promotion; conversion from fixed-term to tenured academic appointments, academic study leave and staff development. It was noted that the Performance Management System was not designed “to deal with unsatisfactory performances; however, it provides a ‘warning signal’ when problems arise … (and that) … (d)isciplinary action arising from unsatisfactory performance is governed by separate procedures” (PF p58). The Panel also noted that a suite of University-wide excellence awards and merit recognition certificates exists and these too inform the University’s performance review processes.

Staff interviewed at all levels and from across a range of different organisational units and with different industrial affiliations spoke favourably of their experience of the Performance Management System at UTAS. Scrutiny of the minutes of human resources committees dealing with matters such as academic probations and promotions revealed the exercise of a generally rational and coherent approach to the solution of staffing issues.

Commendation 11

AUQA commends the work UTAS has undertaken in developing and refining the Performance Management System so that it both informs and responds to the performance related aspects of the University’s staff recruitment, probation, promotion, and staff development policies and procedures.

4.4 Staffing Improvements

In response to staff feedback and the results of a Staff Survey undertaken in 2003, in 2004 a Working Party established by the Planning and Resources Committee reviewed the issue of workloads, and developed a set of principles and guidelines on academic workloads. However, in discussing matters to do with the workload models of different academic organisational units involved in the delivery of TNE programs, it became apparent that there was some considerable variation.

The Audit Panel was advised that the University was in the process of addressing this issue through policy development. The Audit Panel noted that one of the improvements listed in the staff section of the Portfolio indicated that UTAS was to “develop a comprehensive staff profile plan by October 2005 and will monitor the implementation of the workload models in 2006” (PF p64).

The Audit Panel observes that this also provides an opportunity for UTAS to also address any TNE program workload issues (see also section 6).
Affirmation 11

AUQA affirms the UTAS decision requiring agreed workload models to be negotiated in all schools by 2006, and encourages the University to ensure that its policy relating to the recognition of TNE teaching in load is fully implemented.

Another area for improvement identified by the University in its own self-review was its equity performance. Two areas in particular were identified: (i) Introduction of a Leadership and Development Program for Women, aimed at reducing gender imbalance in senior appointments; and, (ii) the establishment of a combined Equity Unit to cater more effectively for the needs of both staff and students, including the roll-out of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Affirmation 12

AUQA affirms the UTAS decision to introduce a suite of programs to improve the University’s equity performance; including identifying gender targets for senior academic and management appointments, and Indigenous and NESB students.
5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In contrast to teaching and learning, and research, at the time of the Audit Visit UTAS did not have a separate development or management plan for community engagement (as was the case in the section on staff). However, the University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following longer-term goal that explicitly mentions community engagement:

**Reputation**

*To be recognised for its contribution to the growth and development of Tasmania by meeting the professional skills needs of its communities and through pursuit of research and community engagement that enhance the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of its citizens (Growth, Engagement)*

University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 also includes a number of PIs dedicated specifically to the ‘Engagement’ dimension of the EDGE agenda (type and number of PI in brackets):

1. Increasing the number and range of activities in which the University engages with its communities of interest. (HPI:9)
2. Number of Tasmanian students studying in Tasmania. (OPI:4)
3. Enrolment and retention rates for equity group students. (OPI:6)
4. Number of Tasmanian students undertaking study abroad exchanges. (OPI:9)
5. Proportion and level of people employed in EO target groups. (OPI:12)
6. Collaboration indicators and highlights. (OPI:17)
7. Community Engagement indicators including resources used, sharing of facilities and number and effectiveness of community events; annual highlights; summary of media reporting. (OPI:18)

In addition, there are another eight PIs which relate to both ‘Engagement’ and to another dimension of the EDGE agenda.

5.1 Planning for the UTAS Community Engagement Agenda

UTAS defines community engagement as follows:

“The University sees community engagement as working with and through individuals, groups, organisations or institutions that are outside the formal structure of the University on activities that may:

- help meet University goals
- involve University expertise in achieving the goals of outside bodies
- build the University’s role and reputation as a community leader, and
- enrich the social, intellectual, environmental, economic and cultural capital of the community” (PF p65).

The Performance Portfolio also states: “The University’s Mission refers to the distinctiveness of Tasmania and our commitment to provide leadership within the community, contributing to the cultural, economic and social development of Tasmania. … For the purposes of this chapter community engagement refers to relevant parts of the Tasmanian community.” (AUQA emphasis in italics - PF p65)
Given the importance of the UTAS role as the ‘State University’, this treatment is entirely justifiable and appropriate. However, the Audit Panel wished to understand what exactly constitutes the ‘relevant parts of the Tasmanian community’. Examination of the EDGE planning document, a 2004 report entitled ‘Community Engagement at the University of Tasmania’, and the Performance Portfolio, revealed that the answer lies in UTAS striking an appropriate balance between meeting the needs and expectations of the Tasmanian community in general, and those of specific communities within Tasmania.

The Portfolio went on to explain: “The local perspective of community engagement includes the State, the three regions (south, north and northwest) and local government areas” (ibid).

This is expanded upon further in the ‘Community Engagement at the University of Tasmania’ report:

“Nationally the Federal Government views Tasmania as a single region within Australia. However, Tasmania largely operates across three divisions, the South centred on Hobart, The (sic) North East, centred on Launceston and the Northwest which has key centres in Devonport, Ulverstone, Burnie and Smithton.

This structure suggests that the University needs a state view on engagement but decentralised delivery mechanisms that are seen as relevant, equitable and useful by a diverse range of communities” (p9).

It was for these reasons that the Audit Panel decided that it was important to visit the main UTAS campuses at Hobart and Launceston, and the Cradle Coast Campus at Burnie in the northwest.

The Audit Panel noted that one of the self-review improvements identified by UTAS was based on a recommendation of the ‘Community Engagement at the University of Tasmania’ report to: identify “annual goals and strategies”, together with “a suite of specific indicators for effectiveness and activity”; a community survey to “measure qualitative elements of performance”, and that “(t)hese goals and strategies will be integrated into the next iteration of the University Plan” (PF p72).

Given the need to strike an appropriate balance in community engagement activities, the Audit Panel fully supports this initiative.

**Affirmation 13**

**AUQA affirms the UTAS intention to finalise and implement the proposed new policy framework for community engagement, to take it to a new level.**

The University needs to decide whether it would be appropriate for UTAS to now have a separate community engagement development or management plan.

### 5.2 Implementation of the UTAS Community Engagement Agenda

As noted above, a policy framework for community engagement was under development at the time of the Audit Visit.

#### 5.2.1 Meeting Tasmania’s Needs through Partnerships

An important contributor to striking the right balance between aspects of the community engagement agenda at UTAS are the various partnership entered into by UTAS.
Key among these is the strategic Partnership Agreement between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania signed in February 2005. The key outcomes and objectives of the agreement are as follows:

- Increased collaboration and co-investment in research
- Growth in the State’s intellectual capital as the basis for achieving long term economic and social development
- Joint promotion nationally and internationally of expertise, innovation and, where appropriate service delivery
- Closer collaboration on strategic planning and public policy development, workforce planning and training
- Increased innovation and commercialisation
- Active exploration of opportunities for cooperation and co-investment in physical and information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure development, and
- Building cultural capital as a key ingredient of Tasmania’s social and economic future.

A distinctive outcome of this particular agreement which became one of the priorities for improvement identified in the University’s self-review, is the adoption of a “taskforce approach to the development of joint programs” (PF p72) to pursue community engagement objectives.

Two additional partnerships with the state government are outlined in the Portfolio, that is: the UNIaccess program collaboration between the Tasmanian Department of Education and UTAS (PF p28); and, the Partners in Health agreement between Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services and UTAS (ibid). There is also a memorandum with TAFE Tasmania “to support further work on articulation arrangements and other collaborative activities” (PF p29) and this is commented on in section 5.4.

These initiatives indicate to the Panel that the partnership with the Tasmanian Government is succeeding. Other important UTAS partnerships are described below.

5.2.2 The Cradle Coast Campus

UTAS commenced operations in the northwest in 1995 with the opening of the North-West Centre, located in Burnie. 2003 was an important year for the University’s presence in the northwest. Apart from the appointment of the current Vice-Chancellor, that year there was an external review of the North-West Centre which culminated in the redesignation of the Centre as a campus of UTAS – the Cradle Coast Campus (CCC). That year also the CCC was successful in achieving a National Award for Teaching, in the category ‘Innovative and practical approach to the provision of educational services to the local and/or regional community’.

During the visit to the CCC the Panel was informed that CCC was being successful in achieving or exceeding its EDGE ‘Growth’ targets, and checking revealed that the fastest rate of growth in enrolments within Tasmania was attributable to the northwest. It was also noted that CCC was also a strong contributor to the work of the Cradle Coast Authority to improve educational and training opportunities for the northwest communities, through initiatives such as ‘The Stronger Learning Pathways’ program, and by procuring an agreement with Open Learning Australia (OLA) “to list selected OLA units within UTAS course schedules” (PF p29).

Apart from providing a venue for the teaching of both undergraduate and postgraduate UTAS courses, and a successful University Preparation Program, CCC also is becoming an important node for research activity in the northwest region, with for example Tasmanian Institute of...
Agricultural Research being involved in the establishment of a $1.3 million Cradle Coast Centre for Food Innovation Systems, announced only in March 2005.

Another dimension of the work of the CCC is the provision of community education programs for the northwest communities. One example is ‘Island Minds – Returning Home’ - a program run in 2004 involving high-profile Tasmanians who have been successful in their chosen field ‘offshore’ from Tasmania or overseas, coming back to talk to the local Tasmanian community. This idea resonates well with the EDGE agenda, echoing as it does the themes of excellence, distinctiveness, growth, and engagement.

The value of the work being done at the CCC is included in the audit finding at section 5.3.

5.2.3 Other Partnerships

In addition to the Tasmanian Government and the Cradle Coast Authority, UTAS has developed or is developing partnerships with local governments and other local community bodies. These are:

- a Memorandum Of Understanding and Cooperation in place with Launceston City Council to achieve mutual aspirations for community engagement activities, and
- negotiations with the Hobart City Council to establish a similar memorandum.

Other initiatives that engage UTAS in collaboration with Tasmanian communities include:

- links with the Academy of the Arts in Inveresk and similar, including the incorporation of the Australian School of Fine Furniture into the University, an announcement made during the AUQA Audit Visit, with financial assistance being provided by the Commonwealth
- Edge Radio 99.3FM – a component of the University’s Radio Journalism course
- scholarship programs, for Tasmanian students, including regional and remote (as well as for interstate and international students), and
- a variety of community outreach, alumni activities, and cultural events.

Finally, there is the work of the University of Tasmania Foundation as the major fundraising arm of the University, and which is managed by its own board of governors.

With respect to these ‘other partnerships’, the Audit Panel considered that UTAS deserves some recognition for the quality of the relationships established with various local Tasmanian communities that these links have afforded.

**Commendation 12**

AUQA commends UTAS for developing positive relationships with City Councils, for the Edge Radio operation, and for the activities of the University Foundation.

5.3 Review of Community Engagement Performance

Taking the entire UTAS community engagement portfolio together, with the exception of the two areas identified for further attention in section 5.4, the Audit Panel was of a similar positive view of its value to the Tasmanian community.
Notwithstanding the areas for improvement that are noted below, the Audit Panel concluded that the University’s approach to community engagement was working well, and should be commended.

**Commendation 13**

AUQA commends UTAS on the very positive engagement with the Tasmanian community including several strong partnerships: A key partnership with the state government; and the development of University activity in the northwest through the Cradle Coast Campus.

5.4 **Community Engagement Improvements**

The Audit Panel noted that in the 2004 ‘Community Engagement at the University of Tasmania’ report, that “activities with the Aboriginal communities in Tasmania”, and “close involvement with schools and teachers”, were identified by the external reviewer as areas of “strong community engagement activity” (PF p71). During the Audit Visit the Panel was also advised of the Aboriginal Partnership Agreement between UTAS and Aboriginal Communities, and of the University’s links with TAFE Tasmanian and Tasmanian schools. However, during the Audit Visits to the three UTAS campuses, the AUQA Audit Panel gathered a number of comments from interviewees to indicate that further attention needs to be paid to community engagement activities in these two areas.

For example, the panel heard from students that the University does little to celebrate Aboriginal students, in particular, National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week. Scheduled for early July in 2005, NAIDOC celebrations might conflict with the end of the University's first semester and this might serve as a disincentive for major activities that might be hosted. However, at the same time, the panel notes that a search of the UTAS web site contains no mention of NAIDOC. This, coupled with the observation in section 2 about Aboriginal students’ perceived lack of involvement by Aboriginal community experts within the University's Aboriginal Studies course, merits attention by the University as it seeks to increase its engagement in the greater Tasmanian community. Students also indicated that with few exceptions Australian Aboriginal people with deep knowledge of Indigenous culture were seldom invited to speak at the University.

It was also clear to the Panel that though there is much goodwill generated by practical placements for UTAS teachers in training students, and by specific initiatives such as in science education, that UTAS could be doing more to capitalise on this, by for example developing closer relationships with secondary colleges that are not located in the cities with a UTAS campus. Another external stakeholder was strongly of the opinion that UTAS needs to rethink its current approach to working with Tasmanian schools for the ‘High Achievers Program’, by consulting more closely with the participating schools about how to optimise the organisational arrangements. The University’s performance in relation to students articulating from TAFE has already been noted in section 2.2.4.

Together, these observations lead to the making of the following recommendations for specific improvements in an overall area of activity that is otherwise working very well.

**Recommendation 5**

AUQA recommends that UTAS investigate opportunities for the University to further develop relationships with the Tasmanian TAFE and schools sectors.

And:
Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that UTAS pay further attention to involving both Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community in appropriate university curricular and extra-curricular events.

In making these two findings as recommendations, the Audit Panel acknowledges that it was aware that at least some aspects of one of these areas had been identified by the University in its own self-review as an area in need of improvement (see Affirmation 12), but as indicated, both areas were also identified as areas of strength in the University’s own ‘community engagement at the University of Tasmania’ report. The Audit Panel urges the University to pay particular attention to the specific focus of Recommendation 6 and in particular any implications it might have for the provision of teaching and learning support for Aboriginal students studying at UTAS.
6 INTERNATIONAL

The UTAS Performance Portfolio states: “For the University, internationalisation means more than simply the number of international students enrolled or the number of transnational education (TNE) programs. Internationalisation also includes the extent of participation in international research projects, the internationalisation of the curriculum, staff exchanges, and the number of Tasmanian students undertaking part of their course overseas” (PF p80). In this section the words transnational and offshore are used interchangeably.

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 includes the following longer-term goals that explicitly relate to the international agenda at UTAS (EDGE agenda dimension in brackets):

**Reputation**
*To be highly regarded nationally and internationally as an attractive study destination, offering a diverse range of high-quality programs that include global learning opportunities. (Excellence, Distinctiveness)*

**People**
*To develop strategic partnerships and consortia programs with key national and global universities and research institutes to further strengthen theme areas. (Excellence, Distinctiveness)*

**Position**
*To ensure that UTAS will have a clear brand that is recognised and attractive locally, nationally and internationally, and a marketing profile that supports its strategic objectives. (Engagement)*

The University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 also includes the following Performance Indicators (PIs) with respect to the UTAS international agenda (type and number of EDGE PI and relevant dimension(s) of the EDGE agenda in brackets):

1. Enrolling international students at or above the national average as a proportion of all students (HPI:4 – Growth; Engagement)
2. Number of commencing international students (OPI:3 – Growth)
3. Proportion of course units that are international or intercultural in focus (OPI:8 – Distinctiveness; Engagement)
4. Number of Tasmanian students that are undertaking study abroad exchanges (OPI:9 – Engagement).

6.1 Planning for the UTAS International Agenda

As indicated above, the University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007 has several international goals, objectives and performance measures, which are articulated with the Teaching and Learning Development Plan, and to a lesser extent the Research and Research Training Management Plan. All faculty plans contain faculty-specific internationalisation strategies.

In addition, there is the International Services Plan 2005, which outlines the International Division’s strategies to meet the University’s goals for internationalisation. These are supported by the International Marketing Plan, the Transnational Education Strategic and Business Plan, and the English Language Centre Plan.
However, it was noted that two of the improvements identified by the University in its self-review were the need to further integrate University-wide and faculty-based planning, and follow up on the implementation of some significant reviews of the TNE area. Further comment on these observations is made below.

The Audit Panel considered that the University was still in the process of putting in place a comprehensive planning framework to cover its range of international activities, but on its own admission, there was still some work to be done, especially in the TNE area, and this finding is affirmed by the Panel in section 6.3.

6.2 Implementation of the UTAS International Agenda

The key contributors to success in implementing the UTAS international agenda that are claimed in the Performance Portfolio are:

- governance structures and responsibilities - including the leadership provided by the DVC and the Director International Services, and the work of the International Committee, and Faculty-based committees
- alignment of resources to international priorities – including budget-setting, and the provision of scholarships and the availability of strategic funds to support international initiatives
- international student recruitment and marketing – including the achievement of an increase in the number of international students studying on-shore in excess of 17%, a rate in excess of the national average for 2003-2004
- systems and processes put in place to assure the quality of programs and courses for international students - including the quality of students recruited, and the quality of the student experience
- the International Exchange program - especially in attracting in-bound overseas students, and international research projects involving UTAS staff, and international staff exchange.

With respect to international activity onshore, during the visits to Hobart and Launceston campuses, the Audit Panel tested a number of these features, and especially those relating to the systems and processes to ensure quality, by interviewing a range of UTAS staff involved in international activities, both onshore and offshore, and by interviews with international and domestic students.

The Audit Panel also looked carefully at the international policies and procedures and student data provided to it by the University.

Out of these deliberations the Audit Panel formed the view that the UTAS and Tasmanian communities are both enriched by the participation of international students studying onshore, and by the efforts of the University to provide an international dimension to the UTAS curriculum for domestic students. The University is aware that the uptake of outbound exchange opportunities is relatively low, and is investigating ways in which uptake can be improved.

Commendation 14

AUQA commends UTAS for promoting an international dimension to the student experience.

With respect to UTAS operations offshore, the Audit Panel decided that it needed to visit a cross-section of the University’s collaborative operations with offshore partners. In the Performance Portfolio, 12 program partnerships were listed as being current, some of which were in the process of being terminated, and others renewed, following review.
The Panel therefore decided to visit those partners with the largest numbers of UTAS students enrolled, and where, for various reasons, there appeared to be an element of risk relating to quality assurance matters. The partners that were selected for a visit were (with the nature of the program and quality assurance issues involved, in brackets):

- IEP College in Jakarta, Indonesia (BCom twinning program 2+1, that is, the first two years in Indonesia and final year in Australia – there was some doubt whether IEP College held a valid licence to operate in Indonesia as a higher education provider)
- KDU College in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (LLB twinning program 3+1; and a BBiomedSc twinning program 1+2.5 – these are both ‘niche/specialist’ rather than typical ‘bread & butter’ programs for offshore delivery)
- The International Education Network (IEN) Institute of the Shanghai Fisheries University (SFU), Shanghai, People’s Republic of China (PRC) (BInfosys and BCom 3+0 – the 3+0 pattern is regarded as the highest risk from a TNE quality assurance perspective as all the teaching is done offshore, and English is the official language of instruction), and
- The IEN International Institute of Zhejiang University of Technology (ZUT), Hangzhou, PRC (BComp 3+0 – see comment as for SFU above. Also, successful completion of both the ZUT/UTAS and SFU/UTAS programs result in the awarding of dual degrees - one accredited by each partner).

The Audit Panel’s conclusions with respect to the UTAS TNE program are set out in section 6.3, after consideration of the University’s own review of its TNE activity.

6.3 Review of TNE Performance

In 2004-2005, the University commissioned two complementary reviews of the UTAS TNE program – one in October 2004 and the other in March 2005.

The first of these reviews was undertaken by Professor Gus Guthrie who was contracted as an external consultant, and the second by the UTAS Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Professor Sue Johnston. The ‘Guthrie Report’, entitled “Review of Offshore (Transnational) Programs” focussed at the more strategic level, while the ‘Johnston Report’, entitled “QA Review of UTAS Transnational Education Programs” as the title suggests, focussed more on the quality assurance aspects of the TNE operations.

The Audit Panel noted the candid nature of both these reviews in identifying areas and issues in need of close attention, especially from a quality assurance perspective, and after reviewing the nature of the recommendations of these two reviews, and comparing them to their own audit findings which include observations gained from visits to the partners, including how the programs were being managed on the ground, the Panel believes that these aspects of the UTAS TNE program are worthy of commendation.

Commendation 15

AUQA commends UTAS for negotiating partnerships with some well-regarded offshore partners, including the introduction of the Joint Management Committees to oversee relationship management; and for commissioning the Guthrie and Johnston reviews of TNE operations.

However, prior to and during the Audit Visit, the Panel became aware that there had been some late discussions within the University about the best way to proceed with the recommendations resulting from the report of the in-house Johnston review. Noting this, the Audit Panel requested further clarification on this matter at a final callback session, and was advised that the University was committed to implementing the Guthrie recommendations and that senior management was
in the process of working through the Johnston recommendations with deans and heads of school. See Affirmation 14 for the Audit Panel’s finding with respect to these developments.

The Audit Panel reached the following conclusion with respect to the TNE partners visited:

- With respect to the nature of the contract with IEP, the Audit Panel was satisfied from a quality assurance perspective with the information provided by UTAS, and concluded that the University is managing the relationship with that partner in an appropriate manner.

- With respect to KDU, the Audit Panel judged this partner to be a respected private provider of higher education within Malaysia and that the UTAS LLB program appears to be well-managed and operating effectively, but that it was premature to judge the success of the BBiomedSc program.

- With respect to the two Chinese partner universities, the Audit Panel learned that both these institutions were highly regarded locally, both being ranked in the top 100 universities in the PRC, and had their own well-developed in-house quality assurance systems and processes in place. In addition, the Audit Panel was generally satisfied that standard UTAS quality assurance requirements are being implemented for its 3+0 programs.

With respect to quality assurance arrangements more generally, the Audit Panel noted that UTAS staff members participating in the TNE program were subject to induction through the tailored materials and workshop program prepared by the Flexible Education Unit (see p31) which inter alia deals with cultural and cross-cultural issues, as well as TNE teaching and learning and course design issues.

The University is also reliant on the use of locally recruited staff to deliver their programs, and a number of locally recruited staff commented positively on their interactions with visiting UTAS staff, specifically on issues to do with student assessment and the moderation of results. The UTAS Student Evaluation of Teaching & Learning (SETL) system is now a compulsory requirement, and that in a number of cases this requirement has been integrated with the local partner’s student evaluation of teaching process. All this helped form a generally favourable assessment by the Panel of the quality assurance arrangements for TNE.

However, a particular quality assurance issue that concerned the Audit Panel with respect to the programs being taught at the two Chinese universities were the differential entry levels of proficiency in English, which were less than that required for the programs with Indonesian and Malaysian partners (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 5.5 in China, compared with IELTS 6.0). Panel members met with students and staff teaching in the IEN program at SFU and ZUT, and observed notably lower general levels of proficiency in English language. When this was raised with UTAS, the Audit Panel was advised that the IEN programs has a 400 hour English program in first year and an additional 120 hours during the remainder of the program.

Though this goes some way towards providing assurance that proficiency in English is being addressed, the Audit Panel recommends that there be additional tuition accompanied by exercise of a stronger language proficiency testing regime, such as pre-and-post testing to provide evidence that measurable improvement has been achieved by program’s end.

More generally, the Panel was also informed about opportunities for staff exchange support between UTAS and SFU and the prospect of this being extended to ZUT, and of plans by the Faculty of Commerce to send a Teaching Fellow to SFU to identify the reasons why the SETL scores of SFU students were consistently lower than the same units taught in other locations (both onshore and offshore). This response reassured the Panel that action was being taken on feedback from TNE student evaluations.
The Audit Panel also learned that UTAS had decided to limit the future growth of the TNE program, primarily by consolidating its relationships with some selected existing partners.

After reviewing all the information available to it, including by direct observations of the offshore quality assurance issues involved, AUQA offers this generally affirmative finding, but with some stress on the need for further attention in some particular aspects.

**Affirmation 14**

*In affirming the review activity applied to the TNE operation, AUQA supports UTAS in its progress on and further intentions to implement the recommendations arising from the TNE reviews, but also encourages careful analysis of the advantages and risks of further growth in this sector, including maintaining appropriate entry and exit standards of English language proficiency.*

### 6.4 International Improvements

The Audit Panel noted that one of the opportunities for improvements identified by UTAS in its self-review of teaching and learning was to “continue improving quality assurance of TNE programs” and that “the UT&LC has established a sub-committee to advise it on TNE QA issues and to analyse QA reports on TNE programs from Faculties” (PF p34).

The Panel also noted that the University was aware of a need for, and considering mechanisms to achieve, a broader range of support to students undertaking their studies at offshore locations to ensure comparability with services provided to students studying in Australia. The Panel encourages the University in its intent to improve the range of support services to students studying offshore.

A recent TNE initiative brought to the attention of the Audit Panel was development of a ‘Transnational Education Toolbox’, a web site which is designed to provide UTAS staff with a comprehensive guide to planning, delivering and reviewing transnational programs. At the time of the Audit Visit the web site had not yet gone live, but the Audit Panel believes that when it goes public this initiative has the potential to provide a very valuable communication tool.

During the interviews with UTAS staff and students, it became evident to the Panel that apart from those actively engaged in the establishment, delivery, and direct support of the UTAS TNE program, the University’s activities offshore were virtually unknown among students, staff, and external stakeholders within Tasmania.

**Recommendation 7**

*AUQA recommends that UTAS identify and implement ways to promulgate information about the University’s TNE operation amongst its staff, students, and other stakeholders more effectively.*

The Audit Panel noted that one of the University’s self-review findings was the need to ensure “consistency between Faculty and International Services planning, and improving integrated planning on UTAS international matters” (PF p81). The panel believes that this and implementation of the Transnational Education Toolbox should be of assistance in this respect.

Finally, and something that might also assist to make the UTAS international agenda more visible within the University, the Audit Panel offers some further observations on the ‘use of data for planning and benchmarking’ an issue that has been raised previously in several sections of this Report.
It has already been noted by the Audit Panel that only measuring its T&L performance against Go8 partners may be limiting for UTAS. It was also noted in the research section of the Portfolio that “(o)n the basis of similarity in size, vision, status and location, UTAS recently developed a research partnership with the University of Vermont” (PF p49), which the Panel observed was located in a landlocked state, in another hemisphere, and on the other side of the world. In that same section of the Portfolio there was also mention of research collaboration with the Institute Français de Recherche pour l’ Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER) in France, but no mention of the potential for research collaboration or research benchmarking between say the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute and the Shanghai Fisheries University. The RRTMP also contained the following Initiative/Target to: “(e)stablish systematic benchmarking of research performance … for … (t)he whole University against all other Australian universities and selected universities in the UK, USA and New Zealand” (p11).

The Audit Panel believes that in addition to the specific benchmarking initiatives mentioned above, and any internal benchmarking activities already underway or planned, the developing ‘UTAS Quality System’ could benefit from the University of Tasmania benchmarking itself strategically, and more widely against another highly-regarded international university closer to home, ideally one which is also similar in ‘size, vision, status and location’ and with shared aspects of academic profile.

The Audit Panel believes that this observation is in complete accord with EDGE agenda strategy 25, to: “Build prestigious international alliances with key research-led universities that embrace teaching and research, student and staff exchange, and other links” (University of Tasmania Plan 2005-2007).
APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

History and Location

Founded in Hobart in 1890, the University of Tasmania is the fourth oldest university in Australia. In its formative years the University was located on Hobart’s Domain. As the University developed, it outgrew its original site and in the early 1940s began to transfer its departments to Sandy Bay which became the major campus of the institution. In 1966 the Medical School was established and later clinical departments were housed at the Royal Hobart Hospital. The School of Art and the Conservatorium of Music also are located in the city.

In 1991 the Hobart-based University merged with its Launceston neighbour, the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology (TSIT), to form a unified, ‘new’ University of Tasmania. In Launceston the University has a major campus at Newnham and the Academy of the Arts at Inveresk.

In 1995, the University extended its state-wide representation when it opened its North-West Centre in Burnie, recently expanded and renamed Cradle Coast Campus.

Academic Profile

The University of Tasmania, UTAS, has 6 faculties comprising 31 schools.

Faculty of Arts
Faculty of Commerce
Faculty of Education
Faculty of Health Science
Faculty of Law
Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology

As a research-led University, UTAS has a range of major research centres/institutes grouped under 6 theme areas:

Antarctic and Marine
Community, Place and Change
Environment
Frontier Technologies
Population and Health
Sustainable Primary Production

Key Statistics 2004

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APPENDIX B: AUQA’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VALUES AND VISION

Mission:

• By means of quality audits of universities and accrediting agencies, and otherwise, AUQA will provide public assurance of the quality of Australia’s universities and other institutions of higher education, and will assist in improving the academic quality of these institutions.

Objectives:

• Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of quality assurance arrangements relating to the activities of Australian universities, other self-accrediting institutions and state and territory higher education accreditation bodies.

• Monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on quality assurance arrangements in self-accrediting institutions, and on processes and procedures of state and territory accreditation authorities, and on the impact of those processes on quality of programs.

• Report on the criteria for the accreditation of new universities and non-university higher education courses as a result of information obtained during the audit of institutions and state and territory accreditation processes.

• Report on the relative standards of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes, including their international standing, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.

Values:

AUQA will be:

• **Thorough**: AUQA carries out all its audits as thoroughly as possible.

• **Supportive**: recognising institutional autonomy in setting objectives and implementing processes to achieve them, AUQA acts to facilitate and support this.

• **Flexible**: AUQA operates flexibly, in order to acknowledge and reinforce institutional diversity.

• **Cooperative**: recognising that the achievement of quality in any organisation depends on a commitment to quality within the organisation itself, AUQA operates as unobtrusively as is consistent with effectiveness and rigour.

• **Collaborative**: as a quality assurance agency, AUQA works collaboratively with the accrediting agencies (in addition to its audit role with respect to these agencies).

• **Transparent**: AUQA’s audit procedures, and its own quality assurance system are open to public scrutiny.

• **Economical**: AUQA operates cost-effectively and keeps as low as possible the demands it places on institutions and agencies.

• **Open**: AUQA reports publicly and clearly on its findings in relation to institutions, agencies and the sector.
Vision:

- AUQA’s judgements will be widely recognised as objective, fair, accurate, perceptive, rigorous and useful: AUQA has established detailed and effective procedures for audit, that include auditor appointment and training, extensive and thorough investigation, and consistent implementation.

- AUQA will work in partnership with institutions and accrediting agencies to add value to their activities: AUQA audit is based on self-review, acknowledges the characteristics of the institution or agency being audited, and accepts comment from the auditee on the best way of expressing the audit findings.

- AUQA’s advice will be sought on matters related to quality assurance in higher education: AUQA will carry out consulting activities, including workshops, publications, and advising, and will publish and maintain a database of good practice.

- AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency: AUQA will build international links to learn from and provide leadership to other agencies, and will work with other agencies to the benefit of Australian institutions.
APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Mr Robert Carmichael, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne, Victoria

Professor Ruth Grant, Consultant, formerly, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of South Australia, SA

Professor Beryl Hesketh, Pro Vice-Chancellor, College of Science and Technology, University of Sydney, NSW

Professor Vin Massaro, Professorial Fellow, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne, Victoria (Observer)

Dr Richard Voorhees, Principal, Voorhees Group, Colorado, USA

Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT (Panel Chair)
APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

ABACUS.................................A software program for national research benchmarking developed at UTAS
ADRI........................................Approach-Deployment-Results-Improvement
AUQA......................................Australian Universities Quality Agency
CCC..........................................Cradle Coast Campus
CEQ.........................................Course Experience Questionnaire
CRC..........................................Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO.....................................Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DEST........................................(Australian) Department of Education, Employment and Training
DVC...........................................Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EDGE........................................Excellence; Distinctiveness; Growth; Engagement
EFTSU....................................equivalent full-time student units
ENTER......................................equivalent national tertiary entrance rank
FEU..........................................Flexible Education Unit
FTE...........................................full-time equivalent
Go8..........................................Group of Eight (universities)
HESA........................................Higher Education Support Act 2003
HPI(s)........................................Headline Performance Indicator(s)
HREC........................................Human Research Ethics Committee
ICT............................................Information and Communications Technology
IELTS.......................................International English Language Testing System
IEN...........................................International Education Network
IFREMER.................................Institute Français de Recherche pour l’ Exploitation de la Mer
LTPF..........................................Learning and Teaching Performance Fund
MCEETYA.................................Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
NAIDOC.................................National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
NESH........................................non-English speaking background
NHMRC.................................National Health and Medical Research Council
OLA..........................................Open Learning Australia
OPI(s)......................................Operational Performance Indicator(s)
PF p ........................................Performance Portfolio page reference
PG.............................................postgraduate
PI(s)..........................................performance indicator(s)
PIRI..........................................Planning-Implementation-Review-Improvement
Portfolio.................................Performance Portfolio