

**AUSTRALIA**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE, NSW**  
**INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

## **1. THE CONTEXTS FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

### **National system features**

#### **1.1. Government policies towards higher education**

The Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CQAHE) was established on 9 November 1992 as a non-statutory Ministerial advisory committee to assist the Commonwealth Government in the implementation of its strategy for ensuring the quality, excellence and international standing of Australia's higher education system. The Committee first met in June 1993. Committee membership was representative of the higher education sector, higher education administration and industry. The objective of the quality assurance program was to maintain and enhance the quality of Australian higher education through recognising and rewarding effective quality assurance policies and practices, and excellent outcomes in universities.

#### **1.2. External quality assessment requirements**

The purpose of the external quality assessment was to review and verify the effectiveness of an institution's policies, structures, systems and procedures for assuring the quality of three principal areas:

- teaching and learning;
- research; and
- community service.

On this basis, the CQAHE implemented a three year review cycle. Starting in 1993, an overview study was conducted with attention being paid to all three areas. In 1994, the focus was on teaching and learning<sup>1</sup> and, in 1995, research and community service. In each quality round, judgements were made about the quality of processes and quality of outcomes as demonstrated by the universities. "Quality Portfolios" were produced by each institution in response to a prescribed but generalised formula from the CQAHE for each quality round. These portfolios and the supporting evidence represented an institution's competitive claim for additional funds. The claim was tested and verified

through the process of a site visitation from a team, largely of peers, chosen and trained by the CQAHE.

### 1.3. Institutional characteristics

The University of Newcastle was established as an autonomous University on 1 January 1965. From 1951, it had been a University College of the then New South Wales University of Technology (now the University of New South Wales). In November 1989, the Hunter Institute of Higher Education and the Newcastle Branch of the State Conservatorium of Music were amalgamated with the University.

The University has eleven faculties -- Architecture, Art and Design, Arts and Social Science, Education, Economics and Commerce, Engineering, Law, Medicine and Health Sciences, Music, Nursing, and Science and Mathematics, with over 30 departments. There are five major administrative divisions -- Registrar and Secretary, Finance and Property, Information Technology, External Relations and Professional Education and Projects. There are about 800 academic staff and over 1 100 general staff (full-time equivalents). The University has a considerable range and diversity of offerings as would be expected from this broad structural base and as befits its regionality.

The University's operations are principally based on two campuses -- the (original) Callaghan Campus in Newcastle and the Central Coast Campus at Ourimbah, which is jointly managed and operated with the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. The Conservatorium Building in the heart of Newcastle houses the Faculty of Music, and the Faculty of Law also has a major city locus in nearby University House.

The University has a strong reputation as a proponent of Problem-Based Learning in undergraduate teaching. The Problem-Based Learning Assessment and Research Centre (PROBLARC) promotes this learning method through a range of activities both within the University and externally.

The University of Newcastle has a very creditable research record, both in comparison with other Australian universities of similar size or discipline mix, and with all other Australian universities. It ranks by most indicators in the top ten Australian research universities. The University's research funding base in 1995 was \$21.7 million, of which \$19 million was from external sources. It enjoys considerable success in attracting Commonwealth and industry funding for specialised Research Centres as shown by extensive involvement in two Co-operative Research Centres -- for Marsupial Conservation and Management, and for Black Coal Utilisation. Other major research activities are centred on the Key Centre for Bulk Solids and Particulate Technologies and the Research Institute for Gender and Health. The latter is co-ordinating a major *Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health*, which has attracted Commonwealth Government funding of \$3.5 million over four years. The University also has a Special Research Centre, the Centre for Industrial Control Science. Associated industry research centres include the Pacific Power Advanced Technology Centre on the Callaghan Campus and the nearby BHP Pty Ltd Research Laboratories. The Central Coast Campus is developing expertise in food technology in association with local industry.

In 1995, the University's consolidated revenue was approximately \$190 million, of which Commonwealth Government Grants and Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) payments for operating purposes totalled \$131 million (including capital roll-in and Quality funds).

## 2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE METHODS

### 2.1. Organised internal self-review

A faculty self-review process has been prescribed internally<sup>2</sup> and forms an initial and integral part of the strategic planning process and external review of faculties. The aim of self-review is to enhance the quality of the University's activities through each faculty's clarification of objectives, establishment of priorities, assessment of curriculum and pedagogical policies, assessment of research programs and examination of allocation of resources.

Each faculty has produced a self-review report. These reports anticipate the external reviews which have been organised under the auspices of the Committee for University Development and Assessment (CUDA), a committee established by and advisory to the Vice-Chancellor. This Committee develops terms of reference for the external reviews in consultation with the Deans. The Deans ensure that there is faculty input into the terms of reference, and that each faculty plans its self-review around these terms of reference in order to have an expression of opinion on the same issues studied by the external review.

Self-review is acknowledged as a very important part of the review process. It enables each faculty to identify and discuss its strengths and weaknesses, problems, aspirations, and any obstacles it faces in achieving its goals. In conducting self-review, faculties encourage the involvement of as many stakeholder groups as possible. Appropriate student participation is sought as well as consultations with relevant external communities such as alumni, professional associations and employers or employer groups.

The faculty self-review reports detail the goals of the individual faculties, consider the question of how well these goals are being met, document plans to remedy any deficiencies, and plan for further development. This last might include the current status of faculty activities and how these will be maintained and improved in the future. As part of this self-review exercise, all faculties and the two major administrative divisions produce a faculty strategic plan which contributes structurally to and cascades from the overall institutional strategic plan for the University.

### 2.2. Organised external review

On taking office in 1993, the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Raoul Mortley, initiated, as part of a major transformation, reviews of most aspects of the University. The approach was commended in the CQAHE *Quality Review Report (1994)*<sup>3</sup> on the 1993 round.

As indicated above, CUDA is the institutional committee responsible for guiding the external review process of faculties and administrative divisions by:

- drawing up terms of reference;
- receiving reports from external reviewers;
- commenting on the reports from the external reviewers;

- referring the reports and comments to the relevant faculty or administrative division and to Senate; and
- advising the Vice-Chancellor on progress with implementation of the reviewers' reports over a period of time.

Reviews at departmental level take place on an "as-needed" basis, determined by the Dean of the faculty in which the department is located.

Not all aspects of a student's experience will be adequately addressed through the routine but uncoordinated monitoring of individual subjects by individual lecturers. Issues such as overall workloads, library holdings and other service facilities, overlaps or gaps between subjects, and satisfaction with the course by graduates and employers must all be addressed on a cyclical basis. Accordingly, Faculty Boards review each course under their control on a five-yearly cycle and report to the Academic Senate. For the University to ensure the currency and academic integrity of its teaching programs and their compatibility with institutional goals, the five-year teaching and learning development strategy was adopted by Academic Senate for implementation from April 1995. This strategy is designed to improve the quality of curriculum and teaching and ties in with the five-year budget strategy. Responsibility for the development and implementation of this strategy rests with the Quality Management Committee (QMC), established by and advisory to the Vice-Chancellor.

The aim of the teaching and learning development strategy is to review for re-accreditation every subject and course in the University before the conclusion of the fifth year. In particular, faculties are asked to justify the need for every subject recommended for continued offer. Lecturers are invited to make submissions as well as to provide statistical and other data based on their more frequent monitoring at the subject level. These cyclical reviews are viewed as an opportunity to consider the ways in which subjects relate to each other and contribute to the overall achievement of the course objectives as laid down by and agreed with Academic Senate, the major collegial decision-making body of the University. Academic Senate receives and makes a determination on every subject/course review on the basis of advice received from one of its committees, the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC).

### **2.3. External examiners**

In order to ensure that the University's higher degrees are of international standard, extensive use is made in the normal way of overseas examiners. These external examiners are utilised for the marking of research degree theses at Masters or PhD level. A Masters thesis is marked by two examiners, one of whom may be internal, and a PhD thesis is marked by three examiners, one of whom may be internal. The examiners are recommended by the relevant Head of Department and are appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee.

### **2.4. Staff appointment procedures**

Procedures for the appointment of Professors, Associate Professors and Deans are dependent on the Vice-Chancellor's decision either to establish such a position, or to fill a vacant position after wide consultation inside and outside the relevant faculty. Such positions are normally advertised widely in Australia and internationally.

Performance reviews of Deans may be initiated at any time by the Vice-Chancellor. Currently the Deans are appraised on an annual basis. The appraisal process is conducted by an independent facilitator. The specific role of the facilitator is to gather information on the appraisee's work behaviour and performance in terms of job description, collate this information, produce a summary report and provide individual feedback and assistance where needed. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor discusses the individual summary reports with each Dean and reports the overall outcome to the Vice-Chancellor.

Where a term of appointment of a Dean has concluded, the appraisal informs a recommendation on continuation of appointment. In such circumstances, the Vice-Chancellor may, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, recommend to Council on a further term of appointment of a Dean.

External input is also sought where a position of Professor or Associate Professor is to be filled, or where the position of Dean is advertised and the appointed Dean may have the title of "Professor" conferred. A Selection Committee is formed to approve shortlisting of applicants for interview and to make a recommendation of appointment to Council. The Selection Committee<sup>4</sup> comprises senior academics, representatives of the faculty, department or academic organisational unit concerned, and up to two external scholars distinguished in their discipline and appointed by the Vice-Chancellor.

### **3. AFFECT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ON MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

#### **3.1. Relationship to planning and resourcing**

The CQAHE *Quality Review Report (1994)* acknowledged the University's awareness of its need to develop its strategic planning processes and to connect those planning processes to the desired outcomes for teaching and learning. With this in mind, the University engaged the services of three consultants to initiate a revisiting of the University's Strategic Plans at an institutional, faculty and departmental level.

The introduction of five-year one-line indicative budgets, for which the Deans are the financial managers, provides a degree of flexibility and the opportunity to implement changes over the medium term. This short and long-term financial planning, however, is not currently driven in any formal sense by the institutional strategic plan. There is a major task before the University to complete its strategic planning process, to forge an institution-wide approach to strict performance indicators at all levels, and then to have this totality drive the budget process.

#### **3.2. Quality assurance incentive funding**

The Commonwealth Government's Quality Assurance Program made available funding to universities which were able to demonstrate effective quality assurance policies and practices and excellent outcomes. The University of Newcastle's quality assurance funds as received were allocated as follows:

	<u>dollars</u>
– Round 1 (1994) quality assurance funds	
• Centre for Advancement of Learning and Teaching	772 000
• Research Best Practice Program	240 000
• Library Materials	70 000
• Architecture Computing Equipment	50 000
– Round 2 (1995) quality assurance funds	
• Centre for Advancement of Learning and Teaching	1 067 000
• Staff and Consultants re Strategic Plan	214 000
• External Reviews of Faculties and Cost Centres	280 000
• Various Quality Initiatives	224 000
• Research Management Committee	19 000
– Round 3 (1996) quality assurance funds	
• Research Management Committee	1 214 000
• Research Best Practice Program	190 000

The Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) has utilised the quality assurance funds to expand its range of services with the following initiatives:

- the systematic, institution-wide, student evaluation of subjects;
- an Academic Career Development Program (refer 4.5);
- enhancement of research skills including training of staff in supervision of postgraduate students; and
- induction programs for staff and students (refer 4.5).

### **3.3. Promotion**

Promotion of academic staff is defined as advancement to a higher classification other than by appointment to a vacancy. Applicants may apply for promotion from:

- level A (Associate Lecturer) to level B (lecturer);
- level B to level C (Senior Lecturer); and
- level C to level D (associate professor).

Applications for promotion are considered annually and promotions to all positions are on the basis of merit. Applicants are required to demonstrate a high level of achievement in their current duties and a capacity to perform at a higher level.

In assessing applicants, the Promotions Committee considers:

- formal qualifications or progress towards such qualifications;
- research, scholarship, creative achievement and/or professional consultancy;

- experience and achievement in teaching and/or curriculum design and implementation;
- contributions to planning, governance and academic leadership within the University; and
- service to the relevant profession, academic peers and the wider community.

The promotions criteria<sup>5</sup> include clarification of the weighting levels ascribed to the principal areas of academic service, such as teaching and learning, research, university governance and contributions to the community. The opportunities provided through CALT have been particularly useful to applicants in the area of teaching and learning by way of the provision of qualitative and quantitative indicators.

### **3.4. Curriculum review committee**

A major effect of the quality assurance rounds on the management and decision-making processes of the University was the establishment by the Academic Senate on 31 August 1994 of the Curriculum Review Committee. The University's commitment to quality assurance in its academic planning procedures and the central role of the Academic Senate in these procedures made it necessary to establish a body to systematically and thoroughly consider all subject and course proposals for introduction or review. The establishment of the Curriculum Review Committee was conceived in response to the CQAHE 1993 Review Team's observation that the University "need(s) to develop institutional-wide mechanisms to foster improvement"<sup>6</sup>.

## **4. IMPACTS ON THE INSTITUTION AT STRUCTURAL, CULTURAL, CURRICULUM AND GOVERNANCE LEVELS**

### **4.1. New committees**

Three new committees were formed to deal with quality assurance matters at an institutional level. They are the:

- Committee for University Development and Assessment;
- Quality Management Committee; and
- Curriculum Review Committee.

#### ***4.1.1. Committee for university development and assessment (CUDA)***

This committee was established as a Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee. It was established deliberately outside the organisational structure of departments and faculties to provide dispassionate strategic advice to the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Senate on all quality issues. It benefits both from being outside the ordinary structure of governance and from its composition of senior and experienced staff. Membership of CUDA initially comprised seven professors of the University, three appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and four by the professoriate<sup>7</sup>. The original committee has since been complemented by the membership of the QMC to strengthen its approach to the external review process.

#### **4.1.2. Quality management committee (QMC)**

The QMC was formed specifically to help guide the University through the third round of the Quality Assurance process. Membership of this Committee comprises:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair);
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations);
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research);
- University Secretary and Registrar;
- Director, Centre for Advancement of Learning and Teaching;
- Deputy President of Academic Senate;
- Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics;
- Division Quality Management Adviser, BHP Steel Pty Ltd;
- a Postgraduate Student.

The Committee's objectives are to guide the strategic planning process and introduce quality management practices to improve the University's performance in line with its *Institutional Strategic Plan*. As a result of a recommendation from the committee, the University has become a member of the Australian Quality Council.

#### **4.1.3. Curriculum review committee (CRC)**

The CRC was formed as a subcommittee of the Academic Senate to oversee all proposals for new and revised courses. The CRC is presently reviewing its own charter as a result of its experience since inception, with a view to delegating more responsibility back to the faculties for the quality assurance aspects of its work.

### **4.2. New appointments**

A position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance) was established on a contract basis in 1993 to help the institution prepare itself for the Quality Review Rounds, through the formulation and documentation of Quality Assurance processes as they applied to Teaching and Learning. The position was discontinued with the appointment of a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor in late 1994, whose duties included responsibility for co-ordinating the institutional response for 1995. An Administrative Assistant was appointed for 1995 to support the work of the QMC and to co-ordinate the administrative aspects of the institution's approach to the third quality round.

### **4.3. Changing role of professors**

The appointment and role of professors in Australia until the 1960's closely followed the traditional European model. Universities were organised into discipline-based departments and the professor was generally appointed as the leading scholar in the discipline and as head of the department, usually with life tenure in both roles. Professors participated in the major governing body of the University through their membership of Professorial Board and/or University Senate.



Rapid growth and diversification in tertiary education at the end of the 1960's saw the creation of the binary system including the colleges of advanced education. Proliferation in the number and type of chairs was significant. There was also a strong and rapid move towards democratisation of university management and governance structures. Most positions, including head of department, came to be filled by election. The link between professor and head of department was partly severed. Often, more than one professor was appointed to large departments. Elected Senates/Academic Boards replacing Professorial Boards increasingly severed the link between professorial appointment and ex-officio participation in university management and governance. These changes were generally welcomed by younger or more research-oriented professors who did not wish to serve as head of department throughout their careers.

The role of professor as adviser on curriculum and on staff matters and as a mentor was generally preserved, at least nationally, by including clauses in legislation which required heads of departments to consult professors on these matters. There is some evidence that this often did not always occur. The title of "Professor" nevertheless maintained its symbolic importance in the academic community.

Professorial appointments increasingly came to represent an acknowledgement of the scholarship and research reputation rather than the management and pedagogical skill of the appointee. Personal chairs are a mark of special recognition for an outstanding scholar/researcher. Initial headship of department came more or less automatically for "Foundation Professors" and for those brought in to revive an ailing department or discipline but usually passed with time to other senior colleagues. All professors were expected to accept the role of head of department from time to time.

During the 1980's, the hierarchy of academic appointments was further altered under a federal industrial agreement. The introduction of academic levels A to E allowed for promotion from the previously permanent (tenured) level A (Associate Lecturer) positions to higher levels. It also defined level E (Professor) as, at least potentially, a promotional position in a way that had not previously existed.

Amalgamations of Colleges, either with universities or into multiple campus universities, and the end of that form of the binary system of tertiary education led to many different approaches to the use of academic titles and the perceived roles of senior academics. Some five to six years after the last of the amalgamations, it is now evident that the title "Professor" (and "Associate Professor") has generally been given to senior academics appointed at levels E (or D) in the former colleges, although often specifically named chairs have not been established for these professors.

The title is also increasingly given as a courtesy title to senior academic administrative appointments such as Deans, Pro and Deputy Vice-Chancellors without appointment to a specific chair.

This means that there are now professors amongst whom are those filling established chairs, those appointed to personal chairs, those with title but no chair, and those with a courtesy title accompanying the filling of a particular senior academic position.

The link between leading scholar/researcher and university management/governance is no longer direct and is often not clear. It is possible that, in the future, the American notion of "full Professor" may become common in Australia to distinguish between those professors with chairs, including personal chairs, and those with a title recognising their level of appointment and/or responsibility in university governance.

#### **4.4. Deployment of resources**

Probably unusual amongst Quality Assurance schemes, the Australian approach required institutions to prepare themselves within existing resources and to compete for reward funds through each of three annual rounds. Guidelines for the expenditure of reward funds stipulated in essence that allocations were to be spent supporting areas of strength associated with the particular round. A brief account of the government-approved expenditure of reward funds is provided in 3.2.

As stated above, the University does not have outside of the internally competitive Quality Assurance Incentive Scheme, a declared connection between its strategic planning process and its budget process. The previous Vice-Chancellor realised the need for a review of expenditure and put in place, as a priority, a five-year budget plan on a weighted equivalent full-time student unit basis for academic areas of the University. The institution retains the challenge of linking its emerging strategic planning process in quality assurance terms as the driver to its short and long term financial planning. It would be fair to say that institutional management happily took tactical advantage of the opportunity provided by the Quality Rounds to reorganise institutional thinking and priorities. It would also be fair to say that the response has been reactive and that a strict Quality Assurance approach is yet to be fully embedded in the institution's thinking and functioning.

#### **4.5. Staff development practices**

The *Quality Assurance Program*<sup>8</sup> has introduced, as part of staff development, a compulsory induction process for all new staff, the purpose of which is to introduce new staff to as many facets of the University as possible, and to make them aware of matters of particular importance. Induction sessions are held at the beginning of each semester.

Also included in staff development is a professional development program for neophyte Level A academics, called "Foundations for University Teaching". This three-day course is mandatory for all academics of less than three years teaching experience. The Foundation is expected to enable academics to reflect on their experience to date, become acquainted with other approaches to teaching, and to learn more of the theory underpinning teaching and learning.

A mentor scheme to assist new academic staff to improve their teaching and research is also available. The scheme includes the development of a plan to include all activities and events in which the probationary lecturer will be expected to engage during the first year of appointment. Such activities include undergraduate teaching assignments, research activities such as applications for funding, preparation of papers for publication in referred journals, and participation in activities within the community and relevant professional bodies.

#### **4.6. Approaches to teaching and learning**

##### ***4.6.1. Teaching management plan***

The University has had a Teaching Management Plan since amalgamation in 1989. The current *Teaching Management Plan 1995-1999*<sup>9</sup>, is being reviewed with a brief to ensure that proper recognition is given to information technology, audio-visual services provided in classrooms and

theatres, and flexible mode of delivery. Two principal goals of the University in relation to the plan are:

- to attract and develop students to the highest levels of employability, community leadership, and preparedness for life-long learning; and
- to attract, develop and retain internationally recognised staff for the optimal development and delivery of education and research outcomes, and for the fostering of inventiveness, scholarship and creativity.

Increased support for students experiencing learning difficulties was identified in the University's *Quality Submission 1994*<sup>10</sup>. To address this issue, the role of the Learning Skills Unit of CALT in assisting students with learning difficulties has been recognised by the University through allocation of Quality Funds to improve the unit's ability to service its growing and varied clientele.

#### **4.6.2. Systematic evaluation of subjects**

The Student Evaluation of Subjects (SES)<sup>11</sup> was introduced following the CQAHE report on the 1994 round. The evaluation is compulsory for every subject with an enrolment of twenty students or more. The SES is administered by CALT and conducted once every semester. The procedure has been designed so that the information obtained may be used for continuous improvement of learning. The survey focuses primarily on questions relating to the quality of the learning derived through each subject, rather than on the teacher(s) or teaching. The procedure requests subject lecturers to reflect on and respond to the outcomes before the results are provided to their Head of Department and Dean. This approach is considered to offer much more value in terms of generating improvements for students. The student response rate to the SES has improved from 55 per cent in 1995, to 62 per cent for Semester 1, 1996.

#### **4.6.3. Department-based student evaluation of teaching**

In response to the *Quality Assurance Program*, the University has developed a procedure for the routine monitoring by individual academic staff of their own teaching. The procedure involves eliciting both student attitudes and information about student achievement. Staff members are responsible for the administration of the procedure, and are required to report their monitoring activities to their Departmental Teaching Quality Committee. Each committee, in turn, reports on a semester basis to the faculties (and/or Board of Studies) which in turn report to Academic Senate.

The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) procedure operated by CALT is available to be incorporated into the individual staff member's monitoring activities where appropriate. Some departments and faculties have routinely collected their own student attitudes for example, the Faculty of Engineering. Previously, this faculty conducted departmental evaluations of teaching, but in 1994 on the recommendation of the Faculty Quality Assurance Committee, a faculty-wide evaluation was introduced<sup>12</sup>. This faculty evaluation consisted of five obligatory questions based on the Graduate Careers Council of Australia survey, with space for a further five to ten questions that could be added by an academic member of staff to make them more subject-specific. This evaluation was discontinued in Semester 2 of 1995, following the introduction of the University-wide SES administered by CALT.

#### **4.7. Approaches to postgraduate students**

The CQAHE endorsed as an area of priority identified in the University's *Quality Submission 1994* the enhanced monitoring of postgraduate supervision and appropriate training for supervisors. This has been actively addressed as the University has examined aspects of its management of research higher degree candidates. More detailed and explicit guidelines on the responsibilities of candidate, supervisor, department faculty and University respectively have been developed. There now exists a statement on the principles to be observed in the use of intellectual property and copyright owned by a third party. A *Memorandum of Understanding for Research Higher Degree Candidates*<sup>13</sup> documents available resources and other support to facilitate the candidate's progress and successful completion of their degree. The University has also commenced workshops to train supervisors of research students. With the advice of a steering group consisting of Deans, senior academics and a representative from the postgraduate students' association, CALT also provides a program on Postgraduate Teaching and Learning to assist postgraduate supervisors and students, and to improve the quality of the postgraduate learning experience by provision of individual counselling, seminars, workshops and short courses. The Graduate Studies Committee provides a focal point for standardising and improving research degree support practices by way of induction for students, annual review and supervisor training.

### **5. INTERNAL CASE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION OF OUTCOMES AND EFFECT ON THE FUTURE OF THE INSTITUTION**

Naturally, interpretation of institutional outcomes will vary according to whom the question is put. From the point of view of the Vice-Chancellor of the time, the quality rounds represented an invaluable opportunity to attempt to change both culture and practice in an institution which had not previously set great value on the formal processes of quality assurance. The national quality assurance process therefore, was "harnessed and ridden" for all it was worth to assist the process of change management. It is likely that the then Vice-Chancellor would have been interested in the identification of cost savings as well as the winning of reward funds from the quality assurance process. However, identification of efficiencies was not a focus of the review rounds and there was a great deal of work to do in preparing for the visits in a short time. For these reasons, cost-cutting as an integral part of the quality assurance process was never seriously considered. There is here a huge difference in the approaches taken to quality assurance in Australia by private industry and commerce on the one hand, and of higher education on the other.

#### **5.1. Internal case study**

At the Vice-Chancellor's request, an institutional survey was carried out on the actual effects of the quality assurance exercise on academic staff and of their perceptions of the effects. It was felt these may well be two different things -- university opinion is largely about perceptions and very often not about facts.

In the first instance, a focus group was organised to obtain suggestions for the construction of a survey. A small group refined the questions and the means of analysis. A summary follows with a brief description of the overall survey process, comments on the statistical validity of the surveys, and an analysis of the main points to arise from the two surveys conducted.

### ***5.1.1. Summary of case study***

One part of this case study<sup>14</sup> reports on the perception among staff of the process and effects of the Quality Review Rounds. To that end, the experiences of academic and general staff in the quality review process were collected by means of two questionnaire surveys.

Survey 1 was a one-page survey containing only three substantive questions. It was sent to all staff, both academic and general. Survey 2 was six pages long and invited responses to 47 statements. It was sent to all members of a simple random sample of six teaching departments, in the hope that the heads of those departments would be able to impress upon their staff the importance of the survey, and so help to ensure a better rate of return than would be likely from a random sample of academic staff. It was also sent to a random sample of all general staff in the University. Both questionnaires appear in condensed form in Appendix 1.

### ***5.1.2. Statistical validity of the surveys***

Strenuous efforts were made to ensure a high rate of return in Survey 1. The final response rate was 70 per cent among staff who joined the University before July 1995: that is, staff who experienced at least one of the three Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) quality reviews. This response rate is high enough in our opinion for the quantitative results presented below to be reliable in the sense that, if further efforts had increased the response above 70 per cent, it is unlikely that substantially different conclusions would have been reached.

The degree to which the results from Survey 2 represent general opinion in the University is brought into question by the very different response rates from the six departments selected. In one department (Biological Science), 80 per cent of staff responded, while in some other departments only 13 per cent of staff responded. The responses from Biological Science represent 42.5 per cent of responses received from academic staff and 15 per cent of responses received from general staff. In interpreting the results of this survey, two possibilities must be borne in mind:

- it may be that in the whole of Survey 2, only the responses from that one department are reliable, since in any department the views of those who did not respond may be different from the views of those who did, and in the other five departments the non-respondents are in the majority;
- the results of the survey may be coloured by views in that one department which, given the response rates, may be different from views typical in the University as a whole.

### ***5.1.3. Main points from Survey 1 (one page questionnaire to all staff)***

Survey 1 asked respondents how deeply they were involved in the reviews, how important were any benefits that the reviews brought to the University, and how much additional work the reviews caused them.

- Among staff reporting that they were at least “somewhat involved” in the reviews, 54 per cent of general staff and 69 per cent of academic staff rated the additional work

caused them by the Review process as “A great deal” or “Quite a lot”, rather than “A little” or “None at all”.

- There was no tendency for staff reporting high levels of increased workload to give higher assessment to the benefits from the Quality Reviews.
- Academic staff at all levels attach similar benefits to the Reviews. There is a tendency among general staff for more senior staff to attach less benefit than junior staff. However, general staff overall attach more benefit to the Reviews than do academic staff.

#### **5.1.4. Main points from Survey 2 (six page questionnaire to a sample of staff)**

(Notation such as [A1] refers to the questions asked; refer Appendix 1)

#### **5.1.5. Preparation, process and purpose**

Staff were not impressed by the University’s preparation for the reviews. There were more negative responses (“Disagree” or “Strongly disagree”) than positive responses (“Agree” or “Strongly agree”) to all six questions in this section. The sole exception was that academic staff agreed that they were made aware of the purpose of the reviews [A3]. Similarly, fewer general staff than academic staff were aware of the use the Government (DEET) made of the reviews, though even among academic staff more were unaware than aware [C6].

Staff reported that they found it hard to meet the review deadlines [B1] and did not consider that co-ordination was good [B3]. However the University’s management of the process has improved from year to year [B5]. Staff wanted to be involved in the review process [B6], but felt very strongly that it takes more than a single day of interviews to review a university [B4].

Respondents, especially general staff, felt confident that the primary purpose of the reviews was to stimulate improvements in universities [C2]. However, many did not think that the right issues were addressed in their departments [C1]. A majority considered that the reviews only investigated methods and procedures in their departments, and not academic content [C4], and they considered this appropriate [C3]. Asked whether it was inappropriate for specialists from other disciplines to comment on activities in the respondent’s discipline, respondents tended to disagree, which implies that they had no problem with this aspect of the review process [C5].

General staff overwhelmingly agreed, by nearly ten to one, that the University needed quality assurance and the reviews provided a method and a mandate for doing it [C7]. Academic staff also agreed, but only by two to one. Neither academic nor general staff considered that the changes towards quality culture would have occurred anyway, and again general staff were firmer on this point [C8].

#### **5.1.6. Costs, benefits and rewards**

General staff agreed by 12:1, and academic staff by 4:1, that the reviews generated an enormous extra workload [D1]. Fortunately, respondents also agreed that the review process was useful, and not a

pointless imposition [D2]. They did feel that a lot of extra work was generated by the requirements for reports to be in exactly the right format [D3], general staff agreeing with this proposition by 2:1 and academic staff by 8:1. Similarly, academic staff (17:1) felt more strongly than general staff (7:1) the frustration of seeing a tremendous effort reflected in only a short section in the submissions [D4].

Respondents certainly did not feel that the reviews resulted in saving more time than they absorbed [D5]. Academic staff agreed (more than disagreed) that the reviews were a distraction from their real work, while general staff strongly disagreed with this idea [D6].

Both academic and general staff have moderated downward their views of the benefits that Quality Assurance is likely to bring to the University. Academics' opinion before the reviews was, by a 2:1 majority, that Quality Assurance would bring important benefits [D7]. Their opinion following the reviews is even [D8]. General staff were more optimistic: the ratios were 9:1 before the reviews, but substantially reduced to 4:1 after.

Neither academic nor general staff feel there has been a beneficial change in culture as a result of the reviews [E1]. Academic staff also disagree with the idea that there is now a greater awareness of their department's mission: general staff are balanced on this point [E3]. There has been an enhanced awareness of accountability [E4], but there is strong denial that staff are performing better "now they know they are being watched" [E5]. Departments were well organised before the reviews [E6] and have not now started doing worthwhile things they never thought of doing before [E7], nor are they better organised than before [E8].

On whether the reviews have led to important academic advances, the response was strongly negative in regard to teaching [E9] and research [E10], and moderately negative in regard to postgraduate supervision [E11]. On community service [E12], general staff returned a moderate negative response, whereas academic staff returned an extreme negative response of 21:1 disagreement.

Academic staff were strongly aware of the published ranks of the University of Newcastle relative to others [F1]. General staff also agreed that they were very aware of the ranks. Academic staff agreed by 33:1 that the rankings were important to them, and general staff by 7:1 [F2]. General staff were not aware of feedback provided to the University by DEET, but academic staff were evenly divided on this [F3]. Neither academic nor general staff agreed that the University provided useful feedback to their departments [F4].

Reward money was allocated to Australian universities by DEET on the basis of the review results. Respondents generally were not aware at the time of the mechanisms by which the money was distributed in this University [F5], they do not agree with the mechanism [F6], and they have not in the main proposed new initiatives in response to its availability [F7]. On all these points, general staff respondents were more strongly in the negative than academic.

#### ***5.1.7. Contrast between academic and general staff***

On many areas there was close agreement between academic staff and general staff. The main exception was Section D of the questionnaire, which addressed the costs involved in the review process. On many other questions, the balance of opinion was in the same direction but the strength of opinion differed. For example, general staff agreed by 7:1 that the ranking of the University was important to them [F2]. Academic staff also agreed, but by an overwhelming ratio of 33:1. Questions on which academic and general staff disagreed included the following:

- Many general staff felt that they were not made aware of the purpose of the reviews. Academics were apparently better informed [A3].
- By a slight margin, general staff agreed that a sufficiently representative cross-section of University staff were involved in the review [B2]. Academic staff disagreed by a similar margin.
- Slightly more academic respondents agreed than disagreed with the idea that the reviews were an annoying distraction from their real work. [D6]. In contrast, general staff disagreed with this by nearly 10:1.
- Both before the reviews [D7] and after [D8], general staff expected quality assurance to deliver greater benefits to the University than did academic staff.
- Question E2 proposed a composite viewpoint: “The review process could easily have been a waste of time, but we were able to turn it to our advantage”. This viewpoint met with agreement from academic staff, but disagreement from general staff.
- Academic staff were both more aware of [F1] and more concerned about [F2] the rankings than were general staff.

## 5.2. Interpretation of outcomes

The actual results of the various rounds in a comparative sense nationally for the University were as follows.

- In 1993, the general areas of Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Service<sup>15</sup> were assessed, and the University was ranked in the fifth of six bands. There were 18 universities in bands one to four, and ten universities in band five. The University of Newcastle was ranked equal 19th with nine others from a total of 36 universities and received \$1.132M in reward funding from a pool of \$76.7M.
- In 1994, the area of Teaching and Learning was assessed, and the University was ranked in the second of three bands. There were 16 universities in band one, and 12 universities in band two. The University of Newcastle was ranked equal 17th with 11 others from a total of 36 universities and received \$1.8M in reward funding from a pool of \$71.3M.
- In 1995, the areas of Research and Community Service<sup>16</sup> were assessed in four sub-categories; three sub-categories for Research and one for Community Service. The University was ranked once in the first band and three times in the second band, the four sub-categories comprising a total of 13 bands (3, 4, 4 and 2). The University’s “total band score” was seven (2+2+1+2 respectively). For all universities, the lowest total band score was five, and the highest was 12 (the lower the score, the higher the overall rank). At the top end of the rankings, there were nine universities with a total band score of 5, 3 with 6, and 3 with 7. The University of Newcastle was therefore ranked



equal 13th with one other (with weightings) and equal 13th with two others (without weightings) of 36 universities, and received \$1.4M in reward funding from a pool of \$50M.

In keeping with its improved performance in the 1995 round, the University of Newcastle continued to increase its proportional share of Quality funding: from \$1.1M for the 1993 round, to \$1.8M for the 1994 round, to \$1.4M for the 1995 round (-22 per cent), with the total funding available for the Quality initiative decreasing from 1994 to 1995 from \$71M to \$50M (-30 per cent). The University, with a total band score of seven of 12 over the four bands, achieved for the first time ahead of two of its declared "benchmark" Universities: Macquarie and Tasmania (both 8 of 13). The University of Newcastle also scored ahead of Flinders University, the University of New England, the University of Technology Sydney, and La Trobe University.

Apart from continuing to improve its position through the Quality process each year, the University of Newcastle scored in band one in 1995 for the first time. This score in the sub-category of Research Improvement reflects particularly the work done since amalgamation in nourishing research and research processes in faculties where there was not previously the same level of research culture or history.

The University was disappointed not to have scored in the first band for Research Outcomes. However, the University achieves consistently between 9th and 11th place nationally in the research outcome stakes, and notes that there were only nine universities listed in band one for Research Outcomes.

The University was also disappointed not to have scored in the first band for Community Service, but notes at the same time that the results showed that this was, for most universities in organisational terms, the least well-developed area assessed in this Quality round (there being only two bands with 27 of 36 universities in the second band).

The University of Newcastle continues to support the Quality process and sees the results of this latest Quality round as evidence of success in achieving its stated aim of Continuous Quality Improvement.

### **5.3. The future of the institution**

There have been material benefits from the Quality Rounds at institutional level. The University now has a formal *Institutional Strategic Plan*<sup>17</sup> which includes a vision, mission, and a set of six goals. Within this umbrella, the institution also has formal and approved Management Plans for: Research; Teaching and Learning; Graduate Studies and Community Relations. Each faculty and administrative division has been through a self-review process and considered its strategic plan in the light of these master plans. This is from a starting point of no formal institutional plan and no performance indicators to the existing Research Management Plan. There are strict processes now in place for review of new and amended courses, for systematic student evaluation and for agreement for resourcing of postgraduate students. External review of faculties and administrative divisions is almost complete. Appraisal processes for senior staff are in place.

It is too early to tell whether the culture of the institution has changed. There is certainly an awareness of the expectation of senior management that change is necessary for the continued viability of the institution.

## NOTES

1. *Report on 1994 Quality Reviews*, Vol. 2, March 1995, CQAHE.
2. *Guidelines for Faculty Self-Review*, CUDA September 1995, The University of Newcastle.
3. *Report on 1994 Quality Reviews*, Vol. 2, March 1995, CQAHE.
4. *Procedures for the Appointment of Professors, Associate Professors and Deans*, 1996, The University of Newcastle.
5. *Promotion of Academic Staff, Policy and Procedures 1996*, The University of Newcastle.
6. *Report on 1993 Quality Reviews*, March 1994, CQAHE.
7. *Committee for University Development and Assessment, Terms of Reference and Membership*, The University of Newcastle.
8. *Quality Assurance Program (1995)*, April 1995, QMC, University of Newcastle.
9. *Teaching Management Plan 1995-1999*, The University of Newcastle.
10. *Quality Submission 1994*, The University of Newcastle.
11. *Student Evaluation of Subjects*, CALT, The University of Newcastle.
12. *Student Feedback Questionnaire*, Faculty of Engineering, The University of Newcastle.
13. *Memorandum of Understanding Research higher Degree Candidates*, 1996, The University of Newcastle.
14. *The Impact of the DEET Quality Reviews, A Survey of Staff Impressions, May 1996*, Dr K. Dear, Department of Statistics, The University of Newcastle.
15. *Quality Assurance Portfolio 1993*, The University of Newcastle.
16. *Quality Portfolio 1995*, The University of Newcastle.
17. *Institutional Strategic Plan 1995*, The University of Newcastle.

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*CALT Annual Report 1995*, CALT, the University of Newcastle.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE  
THE IMPACT OF THE DEET QUALITY REVIEWS  
A SURVEY OF STAFF IMPRESSIONS, MAY 1996  
FINAL REPORT, MAY 1997**

**Keith Dear, Jane Harte, Isobel Sendlak and Carla Treloar**

### **SUMMARY**

The University of Newcastle has been invited by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to prepare a case study of the effects of the quality review process on the University. One part of this case study reports on the perception among staff of the process and effects of the quality review. To that end we collected, by means of two questionnaire surveys, the experiences of academic and general staff in the quality review process.

Survey 1 was a one-page survey containing only three substantive questions. It was sent to all staff, both academic and general. Survey 2 was six pages long and invited responses to 47 statements. It was sent to all members of a simple random sample of six teaching departments, in the hope that the Heads of those departments would be able to impress upon their staff the importance of the survey, and so help to ensure a better rate of return than would be likely from a random sample of academic staff. It was also sent to a random sample of all general staff in the University. Both questionnaires appear in condensed form in the Appendix.

#### **Statistical validity of the surveys**

Strenuous efforts were made to ensure a high rate of return in Survey 1. The final response rate was 70% among staff who joined the University before July 1995: that is, staff who experienced at least one of the three DEET quality reviews. This response rate is high enough in our opinion for the quantitative results presented below to be reliable in the sense that, if further efforts had increased the response above 70%, it is unlikely that substantially different conclusions would have been reached.

The degree to which the results from Survey 2 represent general opinion in the University is brought into question by the very different response rates from the six departments selected. In one department (Biological Science) 80% of staff responded, while in some other departments only 13% of staff responded. The responses from Biological Science represent 42.5% of responses received

from academic staff and 15% of responses received from general staff. In interpreting the results of this survey, two possibilities must be borne in mind:

- It may be that in the whole of Survey 2, only the responses from that one department are reliable, since in any department the views of those who did not respond may be different from the views of those who did, and in the other five departments the non-respondents are in the majority;
- The results of the survey may be coloured by views in that one department, which in view of the response rates may be different from views typical in the University as a whole.

### **Main Points from Survey 1 (one-page questionnaire, to all staff)**

Survey 1 asked respondents how deeply they were involved in the reviews, how important were any benefits that the reviews brought to the University, and how much additional work the reviews caused them.

1. Among staff reporting that they were at least “somewhat involved” in the reviews, 54% of general staff and 69% of academic staff rated the additional work caused them by the Review process as “A great deal” or “Quite a lot”, rather than “A little” or “None at all”.
2. There was no tendency for staff reporting high levels of increased workload to give higher assessment to the benefits from the Quality Reviews.
3. Academic staff at all levels attach similar benefits to the Reviews. There is a tendency among general staff for more senior staff to attach less benefit than junior staff. However, general staff overall attach more benefit to the Reviews than do academic staff.

### **Main Points from Survey 2 (six-page questionnaire, to a sample of staff)**

(Notation such as [A1] refers to the questions asked)

#### ***Preparation, Process and Purpose***

Staff were not impressed by the University’s preparation for the reviews. There were more negative responses (“Disagree” or “Strongly disagree”) than positive responses (“Agree” or “Strongly agree”) to all six questions in this section. The sole exception was that academic staff agreed that they were made aware of the purpose of the reviews [A3]. Similarly, fewer general staff than academic staff were aware of the use the Government made of the reviews, though even among academic staff more were unaware than aware [C6].

Staff reported that they found it hard to meet the review deadlines [B1] and did not consider that coordination was good [B3]. However the University’s management of the process has improved from year to year [B5]. Staff wanted to be involved in the review process [B6], but felt very strongly that it takes more than a single day of interviews to review a university [B4].

Respondents, especially general staff, felt confident that the primary purpose of the reviews was to stimulate improvements in universities [C2]. However, many did not think that the right issues were addressed in their departments [C1]. A majority considered that the reviews only investigated methods and procedures in their departments, and not academic content [C4], and they considered this appropriate [C3]. Asked whether it was inappropriate for specialists from other disciplines to comment on activities in the respondent's discipline, respondents tended to disagree, which implies that they had no problem with this aspect of the review process [C5].

General staff overwhelmingly agreed, by nearly ten to one, that the University needed quality assurance and the reviews provided a method and a mandate for doing it [C7]. Academic staff also agreed, but only by two to one. Neither academic nor general staff considered that the changes towards quality culture would have occurred anyway, and again general staff were firmer on this point [C8].

### ***Costs, Benefits and Rewards***

General staff agreed by 12:1, and academic staff by 4:1, that the reviews generated an enormous extra workload [D1]. Fortunately, respondents also agreed that the review process was useful, and not a pointless imposition [D2]. They did feel that a lot of extra work was generated by the requirements for reports to be in exactly the right format [D3], general staff agreeing with this proposition by 2:1 and academic staff by 8:1. Similarly, academic staff (17:1) felt more strongly than general staff (7:1) the frustration of seeing a tremendous effort reflected in only a short section in the submissions [D4].

Respondents certainly did not feel that the reviews resulted in saving more time than they absorbed [D5]. Academic staff agreed (more than disagreed) that the reviews were a distraction from their real work, while general staff strongly disagreed with this idea [D6].

Both academic and general staff have moderated downward their views of the benefits that QA is likely to bring to the University. Academics' opinion before the reviews was, by a 2:1 majority, that QA would bring important benefits [D7]. Their opinion following the reviews is even [D8]. General staff were more optimistic: the ratio was 9:1 before the reviews, though it dropped to 4:1 after.

Neither academic nor general staff feel there has been a beneficial change in culture as a result of the reviews [E1]. Academic staff also disagree with the idea that there is now a greater awareness of their department's mission: general staff are balanced on this point [E3]. There has been an enhanced awareness of accountability [E4], but there is strong denial that staff are performing better "now they know they are being watched" [E5]. Departments were well organised before the reviews [E6] and have not now started doing worthwhile things they never thought of doing before [E7], nor are they better organised than before [E8].

On whether the reviews have led to important academic advances, the response was strongly negative in regard to teaching [E9] and research [E10], and moderately negative in regard to postgraduate supervision [E11]. On community service [E12] general staff returned a moderate negative response, whereas academic staff returned an extreme negative response of 21:1 disagreement.

Academic staff were strongly aware of the published ranks of this university relative to others [F1]. General staff also agreed that they were very aware of the ranks. Academic staff agreed by 33:1 that the rankings were important to them, and general staff by 7:1 [F2]. General staff were not aware of feedback provided to the University by DEET, but academic staff were evenly divided on this [F3].

Neither academic nor general staff agreed that the University provided useful feedback to their departments [F4].

Reward money was allocated to Australian universities by the Government on the basis of the review results. Respondents generally were not aware at the time of the mechanisms by which the money was distributed in this University [F5], they do not agree with the mechanism [F6], and they have not in the main proposed new initiatives in response to its availability [F7]. On all these points, general staff respondents were more strongly in the negative than academic.

### *Contrasts between Academic and General Staff*

On many areas there was close agreement between academic staff and general staff. The main exception was Section D of the questionnaire, which addressed the costs involved in the review process. On many other questions, the balance of opinion was in the same direction but the strength of opinion differed. For example, general staff agreed by 7:1 that the ranking of the University was important to them [F2]. Academic staff also agreed, but by an overwhelming ratio of 33:1. Questions on which academic and general staff disagreed included the following:

- Many general staff felt that they were not made aware of the purpose of the reviews. Academics were apparently better informed [A3].
- By a slight margin, general staff agreed that a sufficiently representative cross-section of University staff were involved in the review [B2]. Academic staff disagreed by a similar margin.
- Slightly more academic respondents agreed than disagreed with the idea that the reviews were an annoying distraction from their real work. [D6]. In contrast, general staff disagreed with this by nearly 10:1.
- Both before the reviews [D7] and after [D8], general staff expected quality assurance to deliver greater benefits to the University than did academic staff.
- Question E2 proposed a composite viewpoint: “The review process could easily have been a waste of time, but we were able to turn it to our advantage”. This viewpoint met with agreement from academic staff, but disagreement from general staff.
- Academic staff were both more aware of [F1] and more concerned about [F2] the rankings than were general staff.



## INTRODUCTION

### Background

#### *The DEET Quality Reviews*

There have been three quality reviews. In each review, 36 universities were assessed. The table below shows the outcome of each Quality Review for the University of Newcastle.

Year	Area assessed	Ranking	Quality reward money received	Reward money as percentage of pool
1993	Teaching & Learning, Research and Community Service	equal 19th with nine others	\$1.132M	1.5%
1994	Teaching & Learning	equal 17th with eleven others	\$1.8M	2.5%
1995	Research and Community Service	equal 13th with one or two others*	\$1.4M	2.8%

\* depending on weights used to combine four sub-categories

#### *Staff of the University of Newcastle*

The University of Newcastle contains eleven faculties. Most staff with academic appointments are located in the faculties, as are some general staff, mainly secretarial and technical support staff. Most general staff are located in other units of the University, which for the purpose of this report have been grouped into five special “faculties”. Details appear in Appendix 1. Some senior staff in these units hold academic appointments.

The faculties are Architecture, Art & Design, Arts & Social Science, Economics & Commerce, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine & Health Sciences, Music, Nursing and Science & Mathematics.

#### **Design of the Study**

The study was designed with assistance from a focus group comprising one representative from each faculty except Economics and Commerce. The focus group met on one occasion to discuss the topics that should be addressed in a questionnaire survey of the staff. The questions in Survey 2 were

compiled by two working group members independently studying a transcript of this session. A draft of the questionnaire was referred back to the focus group members for comment.

The focus group made recommendations on the format as well as the content of the survey. They felt strongly that all members of staff, and not merely a random sample, should be given the opportunity to express their views of the Quality Reviews. Survey 1 was designed to accommodate this without burdening the entire University with a lengthy questionnaire.

### **Acknowledgements**

This survey was conducted on behalf on the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor K. S. Lester. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Ms Sue McAlpine (Vice-Chancellor's unit), Mrs Lyn Cousins (Institutional Research Centre), Mrs Pat Beverley (Department of Statistics), Associate Professor R.W. Gibberd (Department of Statistics), Ms Christine Lehmann (CALT), Mr Gary Stacker (Media Production), and members of the focus group representing the faculties.

### **SURVEY 1**

#### **Survey Design and Response Rate**

The questionnaire contained only three substantive questions, as well as asking respondents' faculty or unit and level of appointment. The questions asked and their possible responses appear as Appendix 2.

Respondents were asked to write their name on their response to avoid being included in repeat mailings. The names were not included in the database, but anonymous responses were discarded.

The questionnaire was initially sent to all names on a mailing list thought to include all staff of the University. To allow repeat mailings to those who failed to respond, a database was established listing staff members appointed before July 1995, who would have experienced at least one Quality Review. The information in this database comprised each staff member's title and name, and information relating to response: whether a response had been received, whether the staff member was unavailable to respond and whether the staff member was included in the second mailing.

Two weeks after the initial mailing, responses had been received from about 40% of staff on this list. A second copy of the questionnaire was sent to the remainder. Three weeks after this second mailing, the total response rate was 70% (1184/1703). When we were informed that a staff member was not available to respond, for example because of study leave or maternity leave, that fact was recorded and the person not counted in the denominator.

The response rate varied little according to title, being 64% if "Dr", 64% if "Mr", 70% if "Associate Professor", 73% if "Professor" and 75% if "Miss", "Ms" or "Mrs".

The total number of responses received was 1 423, though many of these amounted to statements of inability to answer, particularly from staff recently appointed.

## Results of Survey 1

### *How deeply involved were you in the Quality Reviews?*

1: Played a central role, 2: Deeply involved, 3: Somewhat involved, 4: Scarcely involved, 5: Knew nothing about it

Among general staff, only 18% (158 / 899) of those who answered this question responded that they were at least “Somewhat involved”. Among academic staff, this proportion was much higher at 52% (266 / 514). Analysis of the other questions, “How important were the benefits?” and “How much extra work did the Reviews cause you?” will be restricted to these 424 respondents.

### *How important were any benefits to the University?*

1: Extremely important, 2: Important, 3: Not very important, 4: There were no benefits, 5: Don't know

The frequency distributions of responses for general and academic staff are shown below:

Benefits	Extremely 1	Important 2	Not very 3	None 4	Total Total
General staff	20	78	27	4	129
%	15.5	60.5	20.9	3.1	100
Academic staff	18	95	88	30	231
%	7.8	41.1	38.1	13.0	100
Total	38	173	115	34	360
%	10.6	48.1	31.9	9.4	100

General staff: excluding those reporting “Don't know” (response 5), 16% (20/129 for response 1) considered the benefits “Extremely important” while 76% (98/129 for responses 1 or 2) considered them either “Extremely important” or “Important”.

Academic staff: excluding those reporting “Don't know”, only 8% reported “Extremely important” while 41% reported “Important”. Responses 3 “Not very important” and 4 “There were no benefits” were far more common for academic staff (51%) than for general staff (24%).

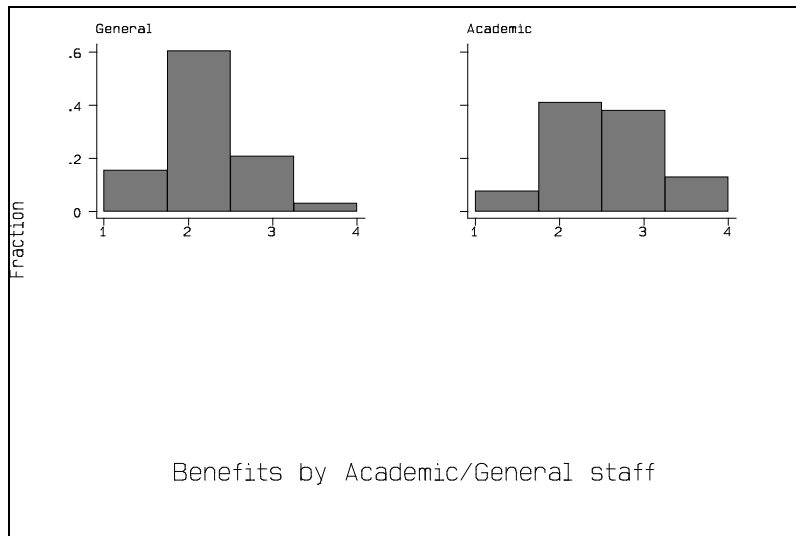


FIGURE 1 Among involved staff who expressed an opinion, there was a tendency for general staff to assign greater benefits than academic staff to the Reviews. In particular, 76% of general staff respondents responded “Important” or “Extremely important” compared with only 49% of academic staff respondents ( $p < .001$ ).

*Benefits by Academic Level*

Figure 2 shows the frequencies of responses to Question 2 “How important were any benefits?” according to the level of appointment of academic staff who were involved. Associate lecturers (level A) and lecturers (level B) were relatively more likely to report no opinion. No associate professors (level D) considered the benefits “Critical”.

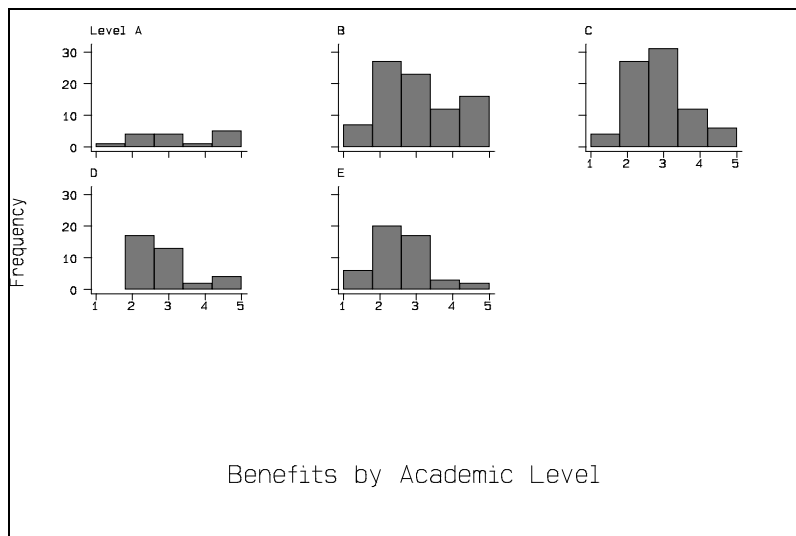


FIGURE 2

*Benefits by HEW Level*

Figure 2 shows the frequencies of responses to Question 2 “How important were any benefits?” according to the level of appointment of general staff who were involved. The “Level 10” category includes more senior staff.

There is a tendency for more senior staff to be less enthusiastic about the benefits. Ignoring those responding “Don’t know” (response 5), the percentages responding “1” or “2”, and not “3” or “4” were significantly different between levels ( $p=.020$ , Fisher’s exact test):

- levels 1-5, 86% (42/49)
- levels 6-8, 75% (46/61)
- level 9 and above, 53% (10/19)

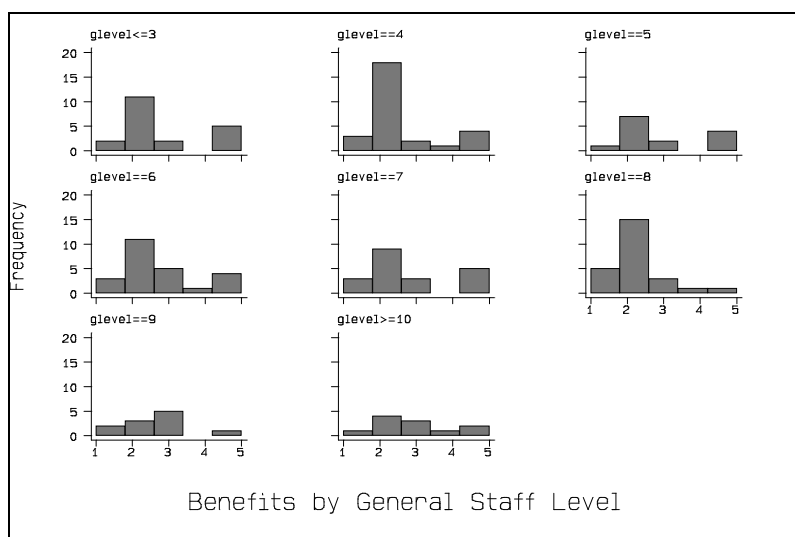


FIGURE 3

***How much additional workload did the Reviews cause you?***

1: A great deal, 2: Quite a lot, 3: Only a little, 4: None at all, 5: Don’t know

Workload	Great deal <b>1</b>	Quite a lot <b>2</b>	little <b>3</b>	None <b>4</b>	Total <b>Total</b>
General staff	22	65	66	5	158
%	13.9	41.1	41.8	3.2	100
Academic staff	45	136	82	1	264
%	17.1	51.5	31.1	0.4	100
Total	67	201	148	6	422
%	15.9	47.6	35.1	1.4	100

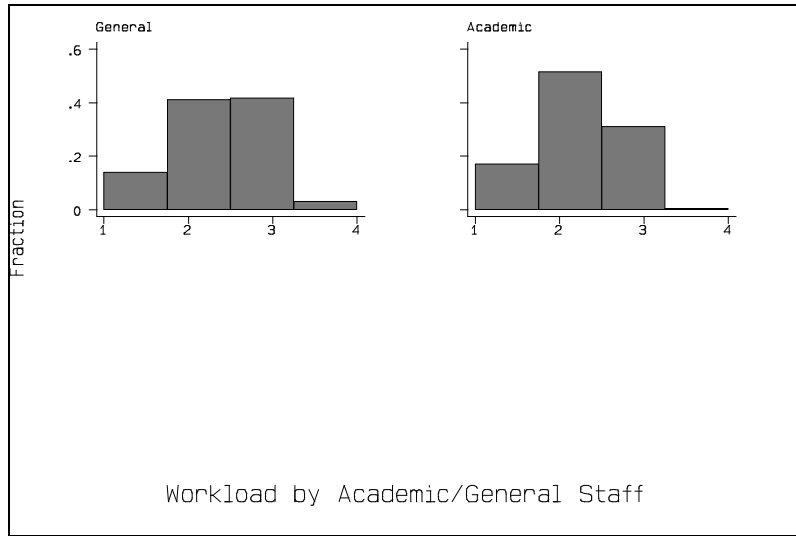


FIGURE 4 General staff: Responses of “Quite a lot” and “Only a little” were equally common and greatly in the majority. Academic staff: More academic staff than general staff reported increased workload associated with the Reviews: 69% compared to 55% for “A great deal” or “Quite a lot” (p=.005).

*Workload by academic staff level*

Figure 5 shows the frequencies of response on workload by level of academic appointment. There is a clear tendency for higher workload responses by more senior staff.

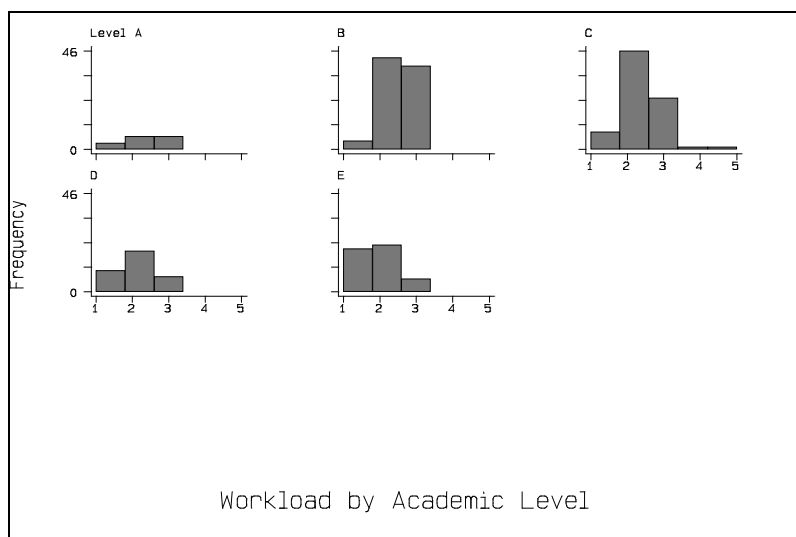


FIGURE 5

*Workload by general staff level*

Figure 6 shows the frequencies of responses to Question 3 “How much extra workload did the Reviews cause you?” according to the level of appointment of general staff who were involved. The “Level 10” category includes more senior staff.

Ignoring those responding “Don’t know” (response 5), the percentages responding “1” or “2”, and not “3” or “4” were:

- levels 1-5    54%    (34/63)
- levels 6-8    54%    (37/69)
- levels 9 and above    65%    (15/23).

There is no significant tendency here for more senior staff to report greater workload (p=.53).

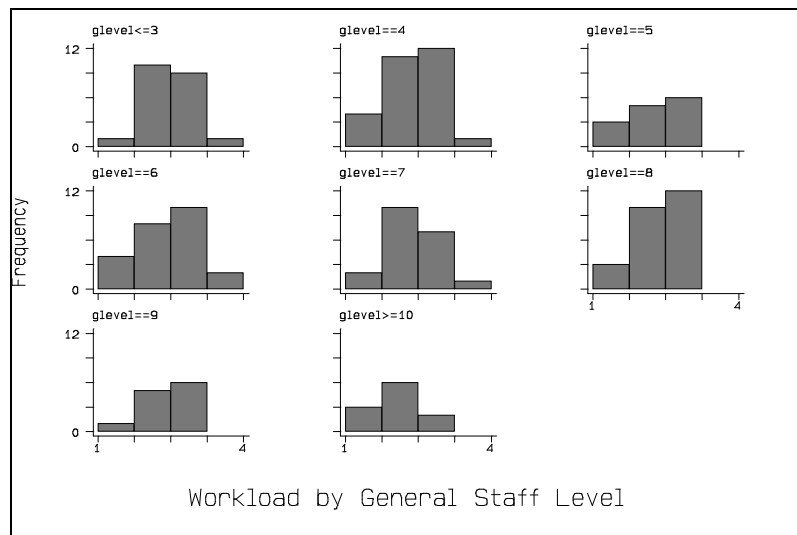


FIGURE 6

*Benefits by Workload (where involved)*

Among general staff who reported some degree of involvement, 156 responded to both questions

Workload benefits	more				less	Total
	1	2	3	4		
More1	1	7	5	8	0	20
	2	7	34	33	4	78
	3	2	13	11	1	27
	4	1	0	3	0	4
Less	5	4	12	11	0	27
Total		21	64	66	5	156

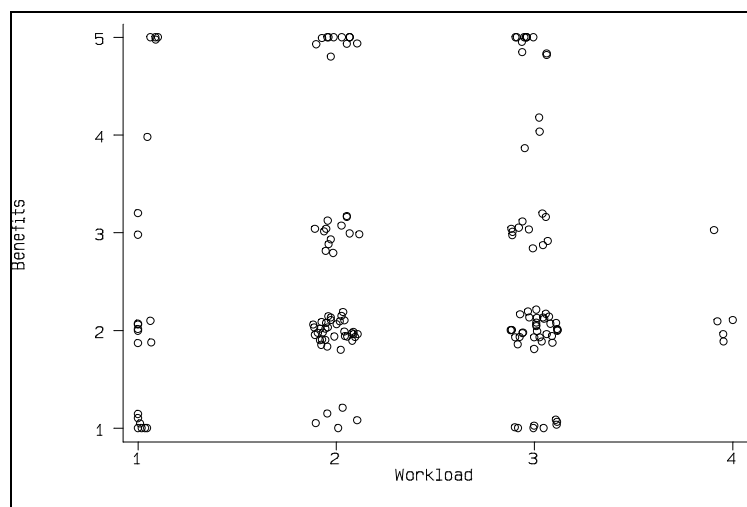


FIGURE 7 There was no tendency for those reporting higher workload to attach greater importance to the benefits of the reviews ( $r=.008$ ).

Among academic staff who reported some degree of involvement, 264 responded to both questions.

Workload		more				less	Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
benefits							Total
More	1	6	6	6	0	0	18
	2	14	47	32	1	1	95
	3	17	49	22	0	0	88
	4	5	18	7	0	0	30
Less	5	3	16	14	0	0	33
Total		45	136	81	1	1	264



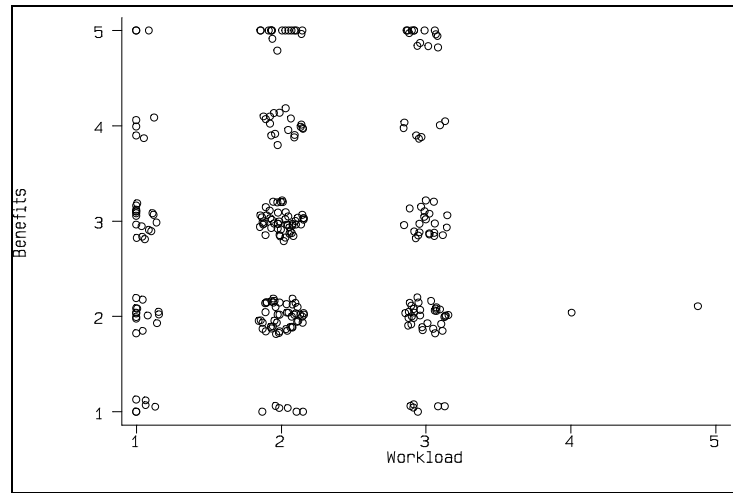


FIGURE 8 As with general staff, there was no tendency for those reporting higher workload to also attach greater importance to the benefits of the reviews ( $r=.03$ ).

## SURVEY 2

### Survey Design and Response Rate

#### *The Questionnaire*

The Questionnaire comprised 47 questions grouped into six sections:

- A. The level of preparation by the University (6 questions)
- B. The process by which the reviews were done (6 questions)
- C. The purpose and focus of the reviews (8 questions)
- D. The costs to individuals and units (8 questions)
- E. Local outcomes of benefit to yourself or your department (12 questions)
- F. After the reviews: feedback and rewards (7 questions)

Each question took the form of a statement, with which respondents were invited to express their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale. In addition to providing a coded response to each statement, respondents were invited to add their comments. These are collected below.

#### *Sampling Scheme*

The questionnaire was sent to two samples of staff:

- a) All staff, both academic and general, in a sample of six departments. The departments were chosen at random from all departments comprising the eleven faculties of the University, except that no two departments were permitted to come from the same faculty.  
Sampling of departments rather than of individuals was done in the hope that the Heads of Department would encourage their staff to respond, and so produce a higher response rate than would be achieved from a simple sample of individuals.
- b) A sample of 200 individuals chosen at random from among the general staff.

This sample was taken to balance the numbers of academic and general staff, in the expectation that there would be more academics than general staff among respondents from academic departments.

The six departments selected were:

- Building (Faculty of Architecture)
- Computer Science (Faculty of Engineering)
- Fine Art (Faculty of Art and Design)
- Drama (Faculty of Arts and Social Science)
- Biological Science (Faculty of Science and Mathematics)

– Surgical Science (Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences)

In addition, copies of the questionnaire were sent to the deans of all eleven faculties, to be made available to any member of staff who might wish to respond.

### *Response Rates*

The response rate was disappointing. Of responses from academic staff, nearly half came from one department. Over 80% of staff in this department responded, which contrasts markedly with the next highest rate of under 50%. The overall response rate from the six departments selected was 36%.

The total number of responses received was improved by returns from the random sample of general staff. Of the 200 selected, 10 happened to belong to the selected departments and so were already in the sample. Of the remaining 190, 64 responded (34%). Responses were also received from 5 academic staff members not in the selected departments, presumably as a result of the questionnaire being sent to the deans of faculties.

In the final data, general staff (80 responses) were over-represented relative to academic staff (40 responses).

	<b>Responses received</b>				<b>Staff complement</b>	
	<b>Academic</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>General</b>
<i>Departments</i>						
Biological Science	17	12	29	81	19	17
Building	5	1	6	43	9	5
Drama	5	1	6	38	13	3
Fine Art	5	0	5	13	27	12
Computer Science	2	0	2	13	10	5
Surgical Science	1	2	3	13	8	15
<b>Total from departments</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>57</b>
Other general staff		64	64			
Other academics	5		5			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>120</b>			