



## Quality Advancement Framework

As a learning community committed to *daring to excel*, the University's quality management processes are designed to ensure we meet our mission and objectives. The quality management processes focus on all aspects of the University's core activities of teaching, research, and community service - as well as on the infrastructure, and administrative and other services which support these activities.

The term "quality" has generally come to mean that the University can reach the goals it has set itself as an institution; that the university not only states it can provide high levels of expertise and commitment to its stakeholders, but can prove it as well.

Working within this definition, the Quality Advancement Framework (QAF) provides a structure and planning process to link the key goals of the University to the strategies which have been formulated to meet those goals. The QAF is self-directed in that the framework is based upon the goals and objectives of the University itself, making use of existing resources but with consideration of the needs of external stakeholders.

The QAF has two parts. Firstly, Quality Management ensures that the University has the processes in place to identify and maintain quality in its activities. Secondly, Quality Advancement promotes excellence in these activities. The two processes are interrelated.

### The Quality Management Cycle

The QAF is based on the idea that the quality process is an ongoing cycle. This cyclical process will normally have four or five main phases and a variety of different terminologies are used to describe them. One possible description is as follows:-

#### ***Approach***

This stage describes the method, technique or policy that is adopted in order to reach an objective, or bring about improvement in a particular area of activity. This is the planning stage, when the University decides what it is trying to achieve, and what strategies are needed to achieve that outcome.

#### ***Implementation***

This stage describes how the Approach has been implemented – the activities which have been undertaken to achieve the University's goals - to what extent it is being

applied across the University, and the level of acceptance and understanding of the Approach and objectives.

### ***Monitor and Review***

Performance is monitored, and progress against the Approach is reviewed on a regular basis. The findings of this stage may result in changes to the Implementation stage.

### ***Evaluation***

Time must be allowed for evaluation and reflection of how successful the Approach and its Implementation has been. Are the objectives being reached? Has the process been effective? Successes should be celebrated. This stage provides an opportunity to determine whether the process was the most suitable for the achievement of the University's goals.

### ***Improvements***

Based upon the evaluation, this stage allows for the identification of strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities for refining the Approach and Implementation stages. The focus of this stage is a consideration of what improvements can be made for the next cycle. It is critical to informing the next planning stage.

The key points of emphasis within the overall quality framework are: planning; robust internal and external approval processes for new initiatives; a regular programme of internal and external review; benchmarking; and targeted support for improvement initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

The QAF is designed to evolve and change over time, as and when the need arises. The various stages of the quality cycle help to refine the process itself, as well as the actions taken.

## **Implementation of Quality Advancement**

### ***Leadership***

The Vice-Chancellor leads the University's Quality Advancement Programme, with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) responsible for design and implementation.

The University Quality Advancement Unit, the Higher Education Development Centre, the Quality Advancement Committee of Senate, the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, Heads of Academic and Service Divisions, Deans and Heads of Departments also have key roles to play.

The pursuit of quality at Otago is guided by principles which include:

### ***Consistency***

- an increased level of consistency in the application and integration of academic policies, procedures and programme regulations throughout the University;
- well-managed and consistent evaluations of processes and systems.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Otago Profile 2006-2008, p. 16.

### ***Accountability***

- the consistent implementation of a system of review and improvement that is transparent to internal and external stakeholders; and that demonstrates the University's commitment to fulfilling its own objectives.

### ***Communication***

- consultation with stakeholders and members of the wider University community;
- the implementation of communication procedures throughout the University;
- ensuring that stakeholders are consistently provided with feedback – “closing the feedback loop”.

### ***Flexibility***

- ensuring that the system of review and improvement is adaptable, is open to innovation and embraces change.

### ***Efficiency***

- cost effective;
- design processes which minimise bureaucracy;
- use quality systems and their results to meet other requirements.

## **Objectives of Quality Advancement**

This section identifies quality objectives which support the current strategic goals and emerging strategic imperatives of the University.

**Quality Goal:** To ensure that the University of Otago continues to be one of the top research-led universities in New Zealand, with an international reputation for excellence.

**Objective 1:** To promote a culture of quality advancement.

### ***Performance Indicators***

- Annual awards being made available within the University community for academic staff to recognise excellence in teaching, research and supervision of postgraduate students.
- Participation by both staff and students in Quality Forums and debates around issues involving Quality Advancement.

**Objective 2:** To involve Divisions, Schools, Departments and Administrative Units more in quality processes.

### ***Performance Indicators***

- Undertaking reviews of the review process informed by units which have recently been reviewed and staff who are involved in the review process.

**Objective 3:** To encourage greater awareness of relative quality within the University, nationally and internationally.

*Performance Indicators*

- More applications for benchmarking funds made.

**Objective 4:** To identify how good practice within one area of the University's core activities can inform good practice in the others.

*Performance Indicators*

- The development of a "best practice" database which highlights appropriate and contextualised good practice across the University.

**Objective 5:** To streamline quality management processes within the University.

*Performance Indicators*

- Internal review processes are transparent and the benefits of undertaking reviews are clearly identifiable.
- Guidelines are concise and easy to follow.
- Reviews are not unreasonably resource and time intensive for staff of Departments, Schools and Divisions.

## **Quality Processes**

There are a large number of quality measures and processes in place within the University and details of most of these can be accessed through the Policy Database on the web.<sup>2</sup> The following is an indicative list:

- Reviews of Departments, Programmes, Administrative Units, and Colleges and Halls of Residence
- Student and Graduate Opinion Surveys
- HEDC Evaluations of Teaching and Courses
- Graduating Year Reviews
- Professional Development opportunities for staff
- Quality Forums

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<sup>2</sup> University Home > Administration > Policy Database <http://policy01.otago.ac.nz/policies/index.html>

## Appendix 1

### Background - development of quality assurance processes

The current quality assurance systems of the University have, as their foundation, a set of principles which were established in 1995 and are summarised below:

#### Principles for Quality Advancement - a summary <sup>3</sup>

- The Vice-Chancellor and a group of senior staff take direct responsibility for leadership of the University's Quality Assurance Programmes.
- The University is committed to the continuous improvement of its teaching, research and outreach activities, and of its methods of consultation with staff and students
- Achieving improvement in the quality of all this University's activities depends upon the commitment and active support of each member of staff, and the University Council.
- The University established a Quality Advancement Committee of Senate to develop plans for the institution, to commission and circulate reports, to monitor procedures for quality assurance as well as progress in applying them, and to share information from within the University of Otago community and from outside. The Terms of Reference of the Committee are:
  - to consult with staff, students and other interested parties to raise the awareness of the significance of quality processes throughout the University;
  - to identify key elements that should form part of the University's quality management programme and oversee all planning documents in relation to this;
  - to advise on improving communication channels on quality and foster networking and benchmarking;
  - to advise the Vice-Chancellor on staff development programmes needed to support quality management initiatives;
  - to monitor the implementation of quality improvement programmes;
  - to ensure that the processes the University has in place to monitor the quality of the outputs of the core activities of the University are appropriate and are applied regularly and consistently;
  - to undertake critical reflection on the philosophy and the procedures of the quality process

#### The Review Process - a summary <sup>4</sup>

The primary purpose of quality assurance is to review and to effect improvement in the University's teaching, research and out-reach activities.

To achieve this:

- A rolling programme of formal evaluations was instituted.

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<sup>3</sup> A summary of the Principles for Quality Assurance, approved by the University Senate and Council in May / June 1995

<sup>4</sup> A summary of the Evaluation process for Quality Assurance, approved by the University Senate and Council in May / June 1995

- Evaluation involves reviews of teaching and research programmes, as well as of the University's policies and systems for assuring quality. Some evaluations may be of a division, faculty, department centre or other administrative unit. Some may concern the entire University.
- Each aspect of the University's operations will be evaluated at least once every five to seven years.
- The starting point for any evaluation is the preparation of self-review materials.
- Each evaluation is in the form of a peer assessment by a panel comprising university staff as well as colleagues external to the university and members of relevant employer groups and professional bodies.
- The University gives serious consideration to a panel's recommendations, implementing all those within its discretion and resources.