Review of Schools Guideline

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Guideline applies to reviews of schools under Organisational Structure Policy and Review of Schools Procedure. This Guideline is provided to assist in the preparation for and conduct of reviews.

Section 2 - Preparation for the Review

Timeline for School Review Preparation

(2) Preparation for School Reviews begins approximately 15 months prior to the review. A timeline is provided on the School, Centre, Institute and Generalist Degree Reviews website to give direction to schools on the general timing of events for the pre-review, review, and post-review phases of the review process.

Structure of the School's Submission

(3) The school's submission should be as short as possible to present all required information and future plans. While not being prescriptive of the exact format or length of the school's submission, the preferred approach is for the submission (excluding appendices) to be approximately 50 pages in length. Appendices should also be as concise as possible, only presenting essential information.

(4) The school's submission should comprise four parts, as follows:

Part 1 – Executive Summary

(5) The Executive summary describes the contents of the school's submission, including comments from the Head of School, and could include suggestions for areas of focus for the review committee.

Part 2 – The History of the School

(6) This brief section describes:

a. the origins and histories of the disciplinary groups of the school and the history of their organisational relationships (i.e. the precursors to the current school), and amalgamations of disciplines/disciplinary groups;
b. major outcomes of the previous review;
c. any factors which might have had an impact since the previous review (e.g. restructures, changes in a funding formula, changes in community perceptions); and
d. any other significant changes since the previous review.

Part 3 – The School at Present

(7) This section includes an analysis of the school's current status and operations particularly with regard to the school's teaching and learning programs, research and staffing, as relevant to the terms of reference. An overview of the school's goals and priorities over the last few years should be provided with an analysis of the extent to which these goals and priorities are being achieved. Budget information should be provided to inform discussion.

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(8) The school should provide relevant data in the performance areas identified in the terms of reference. Performance must be explicitly linked to the Strategic Plan and operating priorities as well as to the school's strategic plan, and faculty strategic and operational plans.

(9) The school should decide how best to represent itself and its disciplines in its submission. The submission includes analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (data can be included in the appendices). This should align with the future direction of the school/discipline(s) and how the school is contributing to that direction and/or realigning its activities in keeping with developments.

(10) The submission should highlight any particular strengths of the school that are not covered by the core performance data, as well as data on established, nationally/internationally recognised, discipline-specific performance markers.

(11) Comparable data for other relevant schools and/or disciplines within and external to the University should be supplied. Where possible, the school should benchmark its teaching and research activities with two comparable institutions, nationally (preferably Group of 8) and/or internationally (for example, a member of Universitas 21). The primary purpose of benchmarking is to assist in determining the direction of the discipline and the quality of the scholarship.

(12) If it is decided that Group of 8 and Universitas 21 institutions do not provide an adequate or feasible basis for comparison, schools should provide reasons for such unsuitability and select another appropriately-regarded national or international institution, or similar sources of data (such as Australian Government benchmark data). The school should identify benchmarking partners early in the preparation process and advise Academic Review and Recruitment Committee once identified.

Part 4 – The School in the Future

(13) This section is the focus of the submission. It describes plans and strategies for the future development and improvement of the school over the next three to five years. It is expected that the school submission should include any relevant strategic or operational plans which show how the school contributes to the University's overall strategy and goals. If the submission includes strategic or operational plans then there is no need to rewrite or reproduce content of those plans within the review text.

(14) The Review Committee provides an objective assessment of the school's current and future directions and strategies, and to either confirm or recommend changes to those plans.

(15) Therefore, this section articulates goals and courses of action that are tied to:

a. performance indicated by the data given in the section The school at present. Strategies for maintaining excellence and improving identified deficiencies should be included. An analysis of the data and an assessment of the school's strengths as well as factors preventing progress is required;
b. areas of potential growth or deliberate refocus. Some of these areas might arise from the benchmarking exercise or involve predictions of future directions of academic disciplines; and
c. contribution to the faculty's and the University's strategic and operational plans, including how the school contributes to operationalising these plans.

(16) In each case, consideration should be given to the school's human, financial and physical resources to enhance performance, to meet the school's objectives and to achieve its targets. Key performance indicators should be identified clearly, alongside strategic priorities that link appropriately to specified timelines, milestones and resource allocations.

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Appendices

(17) The appendices should include the school's future planning documents (such as the strategic and operational plans), budget, benchmarking data, and any additional data as relevant. The appendices should only include information that is likely to be of direct use to the Review Committee. It is not necessary to include details of all staff (such as photographs or brief biographies) or lists of published work.

(18) Where possible, appendices should be presented in a separate document to the submission.

Briefing Sessions

(19) A briefing session for Heads of Schools and other senior members of schools is held in the year prior to the review by the President of the Academic Board to explain the review process.

(20) A briefing session for staff and students of each school being reviewed is held prior to the review (generally 4-8 months prior) by the Academic Review and Recruitment Committee (ARRC) representative and the President of the Academic Board on the review committee to explain the review process, advise the school of the review committee membership, and elaborate on the involvement of staff and students during the review week.

Review Timetable

(21) Organisation of the review timetable is developed by the Chair, the Review Committee, the Review Secretary and other stakeholders as required, and is guided by the following principles:

a. Scheduled opportunities for committee members to discuss and reflect on issues that arise during interviews should be incorporated into the review timetable, including between interviews. It is not necessary that discussion occur only at the beginning and end of the day.
b. Noting the limited time available, the selection of stakeholders for interview should be focussed to seek contributions on key issues arising in the review. Interviews should not crowd the program and should avoid repetition.
c. There should be sufficient time available in the program to enable follow-up discussion with those already interviewed, or to invite contributions from other identified stakeholders, if required.
d. Staff, students and other stakeholders are provided the opportunity to express their views candidly to the committee through the written submission process and will be invited to interview at the discretion of the Review Committee.

(22) To support the Review Committee, it is recommended that:

a. The Executive Dean and the Head of School provide a shortlist of staff members and external stakeholders recommended for interview.
b. The secretariat meets with the internal members of the review committee to finalise stakeholders to be invited to interview.
c. The secretariat seeks comment on the review timetable from the President of the Academic Board to ensure there is sufficient time provided to committee members to consider the input to the review.

(23) A sample timetable has been provided in the Appendix.

Reviews Conducted Online

(24) If the review is held online, or if a significant number of interviewees are not available to participate in interviews on campus, the secretariat will arrange for meetings to be held on a video conferencing tool (for example, Zoom or Microsoft Teams). Depending on preference, the review committee members on campus could meet in a meeting

room on campus, or participate remotely.

(25) Adjustments can be made to the review timetable to make the process more comfortable and sustainable for the review committee members when the review is held online, including:

a. considering the time-zones of the review committee members and scheduling meetings during common business hours;
b. scheduling the review over more than four days, without increasing the total hours attributed to a four-day review;
c. scheduling longer interviews to allow for delays that might occur during online meetings;
d. scheduling adequate breaks during each day to allow members time to step away from meetings;
e. requesting more submissions or written comments instead of interviews, where appropriate;
f. requesting filmed comments from relevant stakeholders which can be viewed before the review commences, where appropriate;
g. requesting the school organise for the filming of a virtual walk-through of facilities, to introduce committee members to the site in advance; and
h. coordinating key areas of focus in advance to ensure interviews are targeted.

Section 3 - Conduct of the Review

Review Committee Deliberations

(26) The Review Committee considers the submission prepared by the school, together with other submissions made by interested persons and organisations, and consults with University staff, students and other persons as deemed appropriate, through interviews. Sample questions that the Review Committee might consider is available on the School, Centre, Institute and Generalist Degree Reviews website.

(27) Following perusal of the school submission and interviews with the Senior Executives, the committee determines whether there are additional questions to be asked that are relevant to the review, so that the terms of reference are addressed. The committee identifies those areas where more information is required and with support from the Secretary, determine how best to obtain that information (e.g. interviews, visits, records, direct requests to the school).

Initial Meetings with Senior Executives and Senior Staff

(28) The review committee initially meets with the following staff or their representatives, as relevant to the review:

a. President of the Academic Board;
b. Vice-Chancellor;
c. Executive Dean;
d. Head of School;
e. Faculty Executive Manager (if the Faculty Executive Manager is not the review Secretary);
f. Provost;
g. Deputy Vice-Chancellors;
h. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement);
i. Dean, Graduate Research School; and
j. Associate Deans.

Interviews with Internal Stakeholders

(29) The review committee meets and interviews relevant internal stakeholders based on written submissions received or those identified by the review committee, including (but not limited to):

a. Academic and professional staff of the school.
b. Undergraduate and postgraduate students of the school, as relevant.
c. Heads of Organisational Unit or representatives who frequently collaborate with the school.
d. Other staff or student representatives as relevant, and as determined by the Chair in consultation with members of the review committee.

(30) If a perceived or real conflict of interest exists with the Secretary or member of the review committee, a confidential discussion with the President of the Academic Board may be requested via the office of the President of the Academic Board, who will consult with the Chair or other members of the review committee as relevant.

(31) Internal stakeholders are able to request an interview with the review committee if required.

Engagement with External Stakeholders

(32) The review committee engages with relevant external stakeholders, including (but not limited to):

a. representatives from industry;
b. representatives from government;
c. representatives from professional bodies;
d. representatives from employer groups; or
e. alumni who are relevant to the school's activities in research, learning, and engagement.

(33) External stakeholders may request an interview with the Review Committee via the Secretary.

(34) A stakeholder dinner, as set out in the Review of Schools Procedure, will be held on the evening of the second or third day of the review.

(35) If the review is held online, the secretariat can include other opportunities for engagement with external stakeholders, such as interviews with the review committee in groups or individually.

Visits to Facilities

(36) Brief visits to, and inspection of, school facilities should be included in the program to provide the opportunity to clarify or illustrate points made in the submissions. Where schools are multi-sited, the use of technologies such as video conferencing or filmed tours can be considered.

(37) If the review is held online, alternate approaches to share details about facilities can be adopted, such as for the internal members to visit the facilities and include a report to the full committee, or for an appropriate filmed tour to be organised by the school in advance of the review. This can be determined by the School and Secretary in planning for the review, and decided in advance where possible to allow time for filming and video editing if required.

Presentation of the Findings

(38) Prior to the finalisation of the recommendations on the final day of the review, the review committee meets with:

a. the Executive Dean (and the Faculty Executive Manager, if the Faculty Executive Manager is not the review Secretary) – to review the draft recommendations and advise the review committee on priorities, feasibility

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considerations, sensitivities, and other considerations that may be relevant to the crafting of the recommendations;

b. the Head of School and the School Manager – to learn of and respond to the recommendations before they are made public; the Head of School may also be advised to communicate with individual staff who might be significantly affected by individual recommendations; and
c. the President of the Academic Board and the Provost – to discuss the recommendations.

(39) On the final day of the review, the review committee provides a general overview of the findings from the review and an outline of the recommendations to a full meeting of the school. All Review Committee members should attend the school presentation.

(40) At the same time, the ARRC representative should inform the school about:

a. the time-frame for completion of the report;
b. the opportunity for the school's consideration of and response to the recommendations;
c. the deliberative process in the ARRC consideration of the report;
d. the passage of the report through the Academic Board to the Vice-Chancellor; and
e. the implementation and follow-up process.

(41) If the review is held online, or if a number of staff in the school are not available to attend on-campus, the presentation can be held online.

Structure of the Review Report

(42) The review report is prepared by the members of the Review Committee with support from the Secretary. The Chair should discuss with members the division of responsibility for drafting individual sections of the report.

(43) It is anticipated that the Review Committee develops commendations and recommendations progressively throughout the review. It is expected that a penultimate draft of the report be completed prior to the departure of the external review committee members from the University.

(44) The report consists of the following sections:

a. Membership of the Review Committee.
b. Terms of Reference.
c. Procedures.
d. Summary of Commendations and Recommendations.
e. Report of the Review Committee.
f. Appendices.

Commendations

(45) Commendations should be made in those areas where the school has achieved outstanding outcomes, or has made significant progress towards doing so. Due recognition should be given to what the school is doing well and should continue to do.

Recommendations

(46) Schools are best able to benefit from and respond to concise recommendations under the themes of the terms of reference. Approximately ten recommendations will often be suitable, although this can vary depending on the review committee and circumstances of the school.

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(47) In formulating its recommendations, the review committee should take account of the resources available to the University and its collective goals and objectives, as expressed in its Strategic Plan and as advised by the President of the Academic Board and members of the Senior Executive.

(48) Every effort should be made to ensure that statements in the report are factually correct.

(49) Recommendations should not be directed toward senior officers of the University or to the University itself. They must be directed towards the Head of School so that it is clear how the school should proceed.

(50) All recommendations, particularly those proposing significant change or changes that impact on other organisational units or University policies, should be justified, substantiated by the evidence in submissions and from interviews, well-argued, and able to stand up to close scrutiny.

(51) Review committees are encouraged to include time-frames for implementation of recommendations.

Report of the Review Committee

(52) There is no mandatory format for the Report of the Review Committee section. One option is to structure the report around the major themes on which the review committee wishes to make recommendations, or to group commendations and recommendations under the terms of reference as headings.

(53) The report should not quote or identify any individuals who made a submission to the review or were interviewed.

(54) A suggested review report template is available online: Review of Schools - Report Template.

Appendices

(55) Appendix 1 to the review report must contain a list of names of all individuals who made written submissions to the review committee and all those interviewed by the review committee.

(56) Student submissions are confidential by default, unless a student requests to be identified. The appendix should list the number of student submissions without naming students who did not request to be identified.

(57) Students interviewed in the course of the review are listed in the appendix unless they request anonymity.

(58) Other appendices are to follow, if required. Written submissions are not included in the report.

Section 4 - Post-review

(59) Following the conclusion of the review, the review report with recommendations is finalised by the Chair in consultation with the Secretary and other members of the review committee.

(60) The response to the review report and implementation process are outlined in the Review of Schools Procedure.

Section 5 - Appendix

Sample Timetable

Evening Preceding Review	• Dinner for all members of the review committee, the Secretary, and the Executive Dean, to discuss review issues and orient external members to University procedures and protocols.

Day 1 - Morning	• Welcome by the President of the Academic Board (15 minutes). • Interview with the Vice-Chancellor (30 minutes). • Interview with the Executive Dean (30 minutes). • Interview with the Head of School (60 minutes).
Day 1 - Afternoon	• Interview with the relevant Faculty Executive Manager (if the Faculty Executive Manager is not the review Secretary) (30 minutes). • Interviews with academic, general and research staff, representatives of professional and other external bodies, and undergraduate and postgraduate students.
Day 2 - Morning	• Interview with the Provost (30 minutes). • Interviews with Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement), Dean, Graduate Research School (or representatives) (15 minutes each). • Interviews with other University staff.
Day 2 - Afternoon	• Visit to school, inspection of school facilities, informal gathering to meet all school staff.
Day 2 - Evening	• If required, a stakeholder dinner for all review committee members, Executive Dean, and representatives of industry, government, professional bodies and employer groups.
Day 3	• Interviews. • Report writing to commence.
Day 4 - Morning	• Report writing, outstanding/unscheduled interviews. • Meeting with Executive Dean (and the Faculty Executive Manager, if the Faculty Executive Manager is not the review Secretary) to discuss draft recommendations. • Meeting with Head of School to discuss draft recommendations.
Day 4 - Afternoon	• Meeting with President of the Academic Board and Provost to discuss draft recommendations; • Preparation for presentation to school. • Presentation of draft recommendations to all school staff at the school – all review committee members to be in attendance (60 minutes). • Finalisation of report in penultimate draft form.

(61) The Executive Dean and Head of School should aim to have some availability during the review in case the review committee requests to schedule further meetings to discuss specific issues.

(62) A sample timetable is also available for download on the Academic Board's 'Reviews' website.

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