

1. Introduction

This paper is a response to a [letter dated 23rd October 2008 from DEEWR](#) to Moore Theological College (MTC). That letter requests 'advice as to how MTC proposes to address the affirmations and recommendations (of the AUQA Audit Report of September 2008), particularly those designated urgent, by Wednesday 17 December 2008'. The paper was approved by the College's Board of Studies on 8th December 2008.

2. Background

- 2.1. MTC submitted its Performance Portfolio¹ to AUQA on 16th June, Audit Panel visits were undertaken on 30th and 31st July and AUQA published its report² on the quality audit on Wednesday 24th September 2008. The report sets out 13 commendations, 10 affirmations and three recommendations.
- 2.2. This response details plans to address each recommendation and affirmation separately. These plans are formulated in the context of MTC's overall program of quality improvement leading to preparation for an application for self-accrediting authority in 2010.

3. AUQA Recommendations

- 3.1. **Recommendation 1:** (urgent) AUQA recommends that the College review and strengthen its approach to strategic planning to ensure effective penetration, clearer accountability and better commitment at the operational level and to provide clearer linkages between its Mission, Values and Objectives and the strategies and KPIs for realising the Mission.

Response:

- 3.1.1. The discipline of an annual update of a rolling three-year Strategic Plan has now been in place since 2004. That plan sets out strategies and targets for each of nine formal College objectives. The College Objectives provide the link between the strategic Plan and operational plans and budgets for each department set out in the Annual Plan.
 - 3.1.2. The time is now right to move from a centrally developed Strategic Plan to an annual strategic planning workshop, involving the Principal and all Department Heads, to drive a 'down-up-down' process of consultation and empowerment. The first such workshop is set down for February 2009. Learning from benchmarking will be incorporated and the Strategic Plan will be confined to top level objectives and directional strategies. Accountability for strategies and targets will be allocated within a modified Annual Plan organised according to the structural units of the College.
- 3.2. **Recommendation 2:** AUQA recommends that MTC review the Key Performance Indicators it uses, possibly increase their number and assign them to individuals, and also more explicitly use these indicators to measure and review performance.

Response:

- 3.2.1. The current Strategic Plan identifies nine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from a total of 43 performance indicators spread across the nine College Objectives. Outcomes are formally analysed at the end of each year using all 43 performance indicators. This analysis is documented in the Annual Performance Review which is examined by the Board of Studies at its meeting at the start of Term 1 in the following year. Where appropriate improvement projects are commissioned and adjustments to strategies recommended to the Governing Board. The changes are then reflected in the ensuing version of the rolling three-year Strategic Plan which adopted by the Governing Board at its August meeting.
- 3.2.2. As part of the planned revised approach to strategic planning (see par. 3.1.2, above) the choice and number of KPIs will be reviewed. They will be mapped against AUQA's

¹ See http://www.moore.edu.au/fileadmin/user_upload/files/PerformPortfolioPUBLIC080616.pdf

² See http://www.moore.edu.au/fileadmin/user_upload/files/AUQAAuditReport0809FINAL.pdf

suggested 'key items of concern',³ linked to individual accountabilities and the frequency of review will be revisited to ensure fitness for purpose.

- 3.3. **Recommendation 3:** AUQA recommends that MTC pay particular attention to improving turnaround time and the quality of feedback to students on the work they submit, in particular at first year level.

Response:

- 3.3.1. Student concerns re quality and quantity of feedback have been identified through SCEQ responses in past years. In response to the 2007 SCEQ results, work was undertaken to upgrade standard templates for each subject area for use in setting out feedback to students. The 'general agreement' responses to the relevant SCEQ questions for Year 1 students (those highlighted by AUQA) are:

SCEQ Question	2007	2008
The lecturers normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going	41	54
Feedback on my work is usually provided only in the form of marks or grades	83	57
The lecturers put a lot of time into commenting on my work	28	58

- 3.3.2. Improvements to quality of feedback on assessments planned for 2009 include:

- 3.3.2.1. Further development of feedback templates aligned with assessment criteria;
- 3.3.2.2. Use of on-screen comments in connection with the roll-out of electronic submission of assessments; and
- 3.3.2.3. Greater use of self-assessment as part of on-line formative assessments.

- 3.3.3. Hitherto the College has aimed at six weeks from the date of submission as a normal time for return of feedback on assessments to students. In response to the AUQA comment, and with a view to maintaining a balance between quality and timeliness of feedback, work is underway to develop mechanisms for increased productivity in marking of assessments in order to move to a four-week guideline by mid-2009.

4. Affirmations

- 4.1. **Affirmation 1:** AUQA affirms MTC's consideration of alternative, more flexible modes of teaching and learning with attention to class size and appropriate use of technology.

Response:

- 4.1.1. Delivery methods currently in use include:

- 4.1.1.1. Lectures (with audiovisual and printed materials);
- 4.1.1.2. Class discussion and debates (involving a range of student and teacher roles);
- 4.1.1.3. Video presentations followed by discussion;
- 4.1.1.4. A range of intensives over 3-12 days during lecture-free periods, especially in languages and pastoral ministry areas;
- 4.1.1.5. Tutorials (small group work guided by a tutor);
- 4.1.1.6. Case studies (a specific problem and its treatment—as displayed in the history of the discipline concerned—worked through by the class);
- 4.1.1.7. Seminars (smaller group work including the presentation of student papers and discussion guided by the seminar leader/s);
- 4.1.1.8. Student-run workshops and skills training groups; and
- 4.1.1.9. On-line moderated forums, self-paced formative assessment items.

- 4.1.2. In 2008 some 75 separate coursework classes were offered. Of these approx 20% involved class sizes of 75 or more, 40% involved classes less than 30 and 40% involved class sizes of between 30 and 75. Of the total of 75 classes about 20% were

³ The five areas are: teaching and learning, research and scholarship, community engagement, support services and finances - see *Report of an Audit of Moore Theological College*, Melbourne: AUQA, September 2008, p. 8.
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by intensive with the remainder involving weekly face-to-face contact for either one or two semesters.

4.1.3.Improvements planned in 2009 include:

- 4.1.3.1. Conduct of trials and investigation of viability of offering part-time study in undergraduate courses;
- 4.1.3.2. Continued roll-out of learning functions using the College's internet-based Learning Support System (LSS); and
- 4.1.3.3. Investment in additional resources to facilitate exploitation by lecturers of the LSS – see response to Affirmation 2 (below).

4.2. **Affirmation 2:** AUQA affirms MTC's support of faculty in the use of technology to improve teaching and learning, for example through the electronic submission of student work.

Response:

4.2.1.The LSS has been in use for two years with currently a full-time equivalent (FTE) of approximately one person supporting faculty and student exploitation of its facilities. A pilot of electronic submission of student work and on-screen marking is nearing completion.

4.2.2.Plans for improvements in 2009 include:

- 4.2.2.1. A doubling of resources to support student and faculty exploitation of LSS;
- 4.2.2.2. Further review of cost-benefits of electronic plagiarism detection;
- 4.2.2.3. Roll-out of electronic submission of student work; and
- 4.2.2.4. Continued roll-out of learning functions based on LSS (see Affirmation 1, above).

4.3. **Affirmation 3:** AUQA affirms MTC's continued vigilance in ensuring that overall workloads for students and for faculty remain manageable.

Response:

4.3.1.Student workload has been under regular review since 1992 when the main undergraduate degree, the BD, was first accredited. Prior to each accreditation review (1992, 1996, 2001 & 2006) benchmarking has been undertaken. As part of this student demand hours were reduced by 30% and contact hours reduced by 25% in 2006. The resultant change in SCEQ Appropriate Workload Scale (AWS) was from 18% to 43% 'broad agreement'. At present demand hours for the four-year BD total just on 4,600 which compares favourably with practice among university and other relevant peer institutions of 4,800 hours. Despite an SCEQ Overall Satisfaction Indicator (OSI) of at least 95% 'broad agreement' for each of the last three years and progressive adjustment of assessment loads the AWS result for 2007 was 36% and in 2008 was 25% 'broad agreement'.

4.3.2.Improvements planned during 2009 include:

- 4.3.2.1. Introduction, based on benchmarking, of an upgraded faculty workload policy involving a normal load of 1,800 hours per year and factoring in a study leave policy allowing for six months study leave to be taken in the calendar year after three calendar years of full-time teaching;
- 4.3.2.2. Consideration, within the context of a review of the BD, of semesterisation for years one to three of all undergraduate courses with a maximum of five units per semester for all courses.
- 4.3.2.3. Consideration of a credit point system for all courses to facilitate easier comparison of workload in other courses;
- 4.3.2.4. Reduction for first year students of the number of units in which they are required to enroll in one semester;
- 4.3.2.5. Implementation of the results of a shortly-to-conclude review of assessment policies with a view to further adjustment of student workload;

4.4. **Affirmation 4:** (urgent) AUQA affirms that MTC pursue the finalisation of arrangements for and implementation of benchmarking for selected relevant College processes and activities.

Response:

4.4.1. The College has implemented benchmarking memoranda of understanding (MoU) with one HEP and a member of a consortium which is a HEP. Negotiations are near final for another HEP and have started with another member of a consortium which is a HEP. The planned next step is to approach a consortium which is a HEP. The foregoing arrangements have produced meaningful outcomes in the areas of governance, approval and review of courses, teaching and learning outcomes, level of scholarly activity, community engagement, support services and finances.

4.4.2. Improvements planned during 2009 include:

4.4.2.1. To accept an invitation to join the Council of Deans of Theology (formerly the Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia and University Departments). Its purpose statement includes: 'to promote and disseminate best practice within member institutions and provide support in matters relating to staffing practice' and 'to develop and maintain commonality of standards across the theological education sector'. The body involves both public and private sector providers, self-accrediting and non self-accrediting providers and large and small providers. The College anticipates significant opportunities within this body to identify meaningful benchmarking projects.

4.4.2.2. To reach agreement with benchmarking partners on and commence action on specific projects in the area of processes (including departmental review and course review) and functions (including admissions, staff recruitment and staff development).

4.5. Affirmation 5: AUQA affirms MTC's plans to review committees and functions that are part of and support the quality framework.

Response:

4.5.1. Completion of reviews of assessment policies and practices and of the Finance Department is imminent.

4.5.2. A process and a program are in place for the review of the effectiveness of each academic department. This program has been held in abeyance to allow concentration on establishing a best practice course review process given that that is perceived to be a critical success factor in the College's planned application for self-accrediting status. With a review of the BD course set down for 2009 it is planned to re-activate the academic department review program in 2010.

4.5.3. The composition and mandate of the Board of Studies and of Academic Departments is presently undergoing revision.

4.5.4. The Governing Board agreed at its October meeting to undertake a review of its functioning and effectiveness. This review is scheduled to take place in first calendar quarter 2009.

4.5.5. A review of the functioning and effectiveness of the Board of Studies is planned for second calendar half 2009.

4.6. Affirmation 6: AUQA affirms that MTC give consideration to formalising some of the currently relatively informal approaches to several aspects of human resource management, such as: performance management of faculty and staff; study leave applications and reports; appointment processes of faculty and staff; professional development provisions; induction and continuing support for visiting lecturers; and the development of an Academic Promotions Policy.

Response:

4.6.1. At its meeting on 26th July 2008 the Board of Studies asked the Quality Improvement Steering Committee (QISC) to facilitate development and presentation to the Board of Studies meeting of 8th December 2008 of revisions of a number of policies, briefs and position descriptions including:

4.6.1.1. Guidelines for study leave applications; and

4.6.1.2. Guidelines for study leave reports.

4.6.2. A project was approved by the Board of Studies at its meeting on 26th September 2008 to upgrade a range of non-academic staff policies and practices including appointment

processes, performance management practices and professional development provisions. That project is due to commence early 2009 with an organisational assessment aimed at identifying HR management issues warranting highest priority.

4.6.3.A proposal for a formal performance management policy and academic promotions policy has been prepared and is planned for consideration by the Board of studies at its February 2009 meeting.

4.6.4.A faculty recruitment and development policy is in place. In the light of AUQA's comments this is planned to be reviewed during 2009.

4.6.5.Faculty professional development provisions are in place. In the light of AUQA's comments they are planned to be reviewed during 2009.

4.6.6.Of the 12 visiting lecturers listed in the *Student Handbook* only seven are active in 2008 and all teach under the direct supervision of a course coordinator who is responsible for their induction and ongoing support. All except one are in full-time positions with other organisations which cater appropriately for professional development. Three teach modules within units lasting for up to a semester. All others teach modules within units which are typically two hours in length. In the light of AUQA's comments a policy in this area is planned to be developed in 2010.

4.7. **Affirmation 7:** AUQA affirms MTC's commitment to professional development in teaching and learning by supporting as many faculty and visiting lecturers as possible to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Teaching & Learning, or parts thereof.

Response:

4.7.1.Provisions for professional development are detailed in the *Faculty Handbook* and overseen by the Vice Principal.

4.7.2.Of the current seven visiting lecturers who are active (see par. 4.6.6, above) one functions as a half-time faculty member and is afforded the same professional development opportunities as full-time faculty members. Consistent with the College's philosophy of learning in community the other six account for just under 4% of the teaching capacity of the College. Accordingly, the College's reliance on this resource is not as significant as implied by the AUQA report.

4.7.3.The College plans to continue to encourage faculty members to enrol in Sydney University's Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning by offering to pay tuition fees and to factor such enrolments into the workload plans of those concerned. The College does not accept that this kind of incentive is appropriate to visiting lecturers given the situation outlined in par. 4.6.6 and par. 4.7.2 (above).

4.8. **Affirmation 8:** AUQA affirms MTC's plans and encourages its efforts to actively pursue better gender representation amongst faculty and visiting lecturers.

Response:

4.8.1.At present one full-time member of faculty is female, one visiting lecturer teaching 40% of a full-time load is female and six part-time visiting chaplains are female.

4.8.2.In 2009 a second full-time female person will join the College faculty to head up the Centre for Women's Ministries. As well the number of part-time female visiting chaplains will rise to 18.

4.9. **Affirmation 9:** AUQA affirms MTC's plans to increase IT support and encourages the College in its efforts to plan for IT governance and management.

Response:

4.9.1.At present IT support for teaching and learning (including Library services) amounts to a full-time equivalent of three (of whom two are professionals and one administrative). IT governance and management is the responsibility of the Bursar.

4.9.2.Plans for 2009 include:

4.9.2.1. A doubling of resources to support student and faculty exploitation of LSS (see Affirmation 2, above);

4.9.2.2. An addition of one person to support the student information administration system; and

4.9.2.3. Establishment of an IT steering committee to oversee investment in IT resources across the College.

4.10. **Affirmation 10:** AUQA affirms MTC's view that the quality improvement framework is being inculcated across the institution through the activities of the Quality Improvement Steering Committee under the direction of the Board of Studies and Senior Management.

Response:

4.10.1. The College's Quality Improvement Steering Committee (QISC) exists to ensure that, in the context of higher education, evidence-based, continuous quality improvement processes are intrinsic to the work of all faculty and staff and contribute tangible benefits to the core activity of the College (of preparing, through its academic, pastoral and service delivery activities, people to be mature, knowledgeable and faithful ministers of the gospel) consistent with its aims and values.

4.10.2. Plans to improve the extent to which the 'quality improvement framework is being inculcated across the institution ...' include:

4.10.2.1. At its meeting on 26th July 2008 the Board of Studies asked the Quality Improvement Steering Committee (QISC) to facilitate development and presentation to the Board of Studies meeting of 8th December 2008 of revisions of a number of policies, briefs and position descriptions. These revisions will have the effect of devolving significant authority from the Board of Studies to Academic Departments. As part of this, explicit responsibilities with respect to the quality improvement framework are being detailed within the briefs of all relevant entities. The entities involved include:

4.10.2.1.1. The Board of Studies

4.10.2.1.2. The Academic Dean;

4.10.2.1.3. Academic Departments;

4.10.2.1.4. Heads of Academic Departments;

4.10.2.1.5. Course Coordinators;

4.10.2.1.6. The Registrar;

4.10.2.1.7. The Teaching & Learning Advisor(s);

4.10.2.1.8. The Dean of Quality & Planning;

4.10.2.2. At this stage it is planned to develop a plan in first half 2010 to phase out the roles of both the QISC and the Dean of Quality & Planning. This is part of embedding quality improvement in the responsibilities of faculty and staff and 'ensuring that quality is not seen as the responsibility of a small sub-group'.

5. Conclusion

All items within the foregoing responses, together with items identified in response to the AUQA Panel's request for a self-assessment of progress towards the College's plan to achieve Self-accrediting Institution Authority, are part of an overall work plan monitored on a regular basis by the QISC.

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