



4 March 2009

AUQA Audit – detailed findings and Raffles College responses

Introduction

In November 2008, Raffles College of Design and Commerce underwent its first Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audit. As part of the review, AUQA also visited two transnational campuses: Singapore and Shanghai.

AUQA's mission (Appendix B of AUQA Report):

“AUQA is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education with the responsibility of providing public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and assisting in enhancing the academic quality of these institutions.”

Here are the report's findings and Raffles' responses to each:

Commendations

1. *AUQA commends Raffles College of Design and Commerce on its strong links to industry and the resulting employability of students in their chosen fields.*

Raffles College is extremely proud of its links with industry and the demand for, and the acceptance of Raffles students into jobs is a direct result of these links across all Raffles sites in six countries.

2. *AUQA commends Raffles College of Design and Commerce on the quality of academic teaching staff, including sessional staff, and on the strong commitment of staff to students.*

The report states, "Staff are also committed to ensuring the quality of the students teaching and learning experience. Students reinforced the commitment of staff to their education, and commented that staff are approachable, and generous in sharing their expertise and knowledge of the various professions within which they are involved. This included staff at head of school, program director and sessional level."

Great teaching is the hallmark of a strong educational organisation. We have a student-centred approach here and that shows in the findings of this audit.

3. *AUQA commends the current implementation of the Staff Workload policy that acknowledges the need for allocated time for continuing professional development and research by staff.*

Affirmations

- 1. AUQA affirms Raffles College of Design and Commerce's recognition of the need for a strategic planning process and the efforts being made to consult with staff and external stakeholders in this process.*

Raffles appreciates AUQA's recognition that a strategic planning process is in place and notes AUQA's concern that a more focused system of accountability for progress against the plan be developed. To this end Raffles College will nominate a senior member of staff and a councillor to have specific joint responsibility for the Strategic Plan's revision and implementation.

- 2. AUQA affirms that there is a need for Raffles College of Design and Commerce to improve the participation of student representatives on Council, Academic Board and other relevant Committees.*

Raffles recognises this as a Higher Education sector-wide issue and will continue to work hard to see students involved in the decision making processes at all levels and locations of the college. Raffles encourages its students to become more involved for greater enjoyment of the learning experience.

- 3. AUQA affirms Raffles College of Design and Commerce's intention to appoint sessional staff to permanent part-time positions.*
- 4. AUQA affirms that RCDC has begun to develop an approach to staff appraisal and further attention must be given to the development of relevant appraisal and supporting feedback instruments.*

Raffles is committed to its staff development program and AUQA's affirmation for the work it is undertaking encourages us to further develop both the working environment and the development of the skills of staff throughout the Raffles network. Professor Steve Rawlinson of Raffles University, and the Chair of Academic Board of Raffles College, has been given the task of fulfilling this commitment through a variety of measures including ad-hoc seminars, coursework postgraduate programs and staff research projects.

- 5. AUQA affirms the beginnings of a quality assurance system at Raffles College of Design and Commerce and advises the College to increase its efforts to ensure the implementation and regular monitoring of quality assurance policies and processes and their practical application at all levels of the College.*

Raffles College is delighted by this affirmation that it is striving for the development of a real quality assurance system across its network. Raffles will charge its newly constituted Council to oversee the actions of the Academic Board to manage improvements in the QA system.

Recommendations

Raffles appreciates AUQAs detailed Recommendations and is committed to undertake the improvements recommended by AUQA to enhance the institution and its learning, teaching and research environment.

1. *(urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce ensures all members of Council receive the appropriate professional development to effectively discharge their governance responsibilities.*

Raffles will develop its governance by refreshing Council membership, by revising the Council's Constitution and by instituting professional development programs for its Councillors.

2. *AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce consider whether it is advisable to have an internal chair of the Academic Board and how it might more generally take advantage of the other external representation on academic governance committees.*

The current external Chair of Academic Board is a "hang over" from the private Higher Education Provider (HEP) days where it was in fact recommended to have an external Chair. Raffles has appointed, Professor Steve Rawlinson as the new Chair of Academic Board.

3. *AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce strengthen the role of Academic Board as the focus of academic discussion and responsibility for the assurance of academic quality and academic standards.*

A key aspect of Professor Rawlinson's appointment as Chair of the Academic Board (see previous recommendation) is to strengthen the role of Academic Board as described above.

4. *(urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce implement measures to ensure that the roles of Chair of Council and Chief Executive Officer are separated and that Council undertake its role in appointing and monitoring the performance of the CEO.*

Raffles has acted quickly on this matter and the role of CEO and Chair were separated in December 2008 with Professor Ron Newman remaining as Chair of Council and with the Council member Mr Isaac Ng taking the role of CEO.

5. *(urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce further define academic governance responsibilities of committees and between the corporate management of the College and ensure reliable communication processes between management and academic governance structures.*

In December 2008, Raffles College revised its management and committee structures, simplifying the roles of all managers and academics and reducing the number of committees with the aim of improving corporate management and communications lines. This new structure was discussed at the Strategic Planning forum held with stakeholders in December and all at Raffles have high expectations that it will further enhance the Learning and Teaching experience.

6. *(urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce Council oversee the implementation, monitoring and management of the Risk Management policy of the College.*

Raffles College is in agreement with this recommendation and a document will be presented to the first Council meeting in March 2009 so that Council can lead the college in this project. A Council member will be given the responsibility to champion this Risk Management project.

7. *AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce review the management of internships to ensure that students and employers are supported by the College and the College is able to use the feedback from employers and students to review and further improve the internship experience.*

As noted in the report, this is an area Raffles performs well in: "The combination of staff and the professional practice orientation of programs has resulted in an effective demonstration of strong linkages with industry. This is an area which the Panel judged is a key strength of the College. Staff members at all three College sites visited have strong links with industry. This was evident in the range of the internships students undertake, and the demand for RCDC graduates." However, Raffles College will charge its Academic Board to manage improvements in this area as required.

8. *AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce review the varied assessment tasks across teaching sites to ensure that similar assessment tasks are being moderated.*
9. *AUQA recommends that the Raffles College of Design and Commerce consider giving its Assessment Review Committee a more comprehensive leadership role than at present in the monitoring and review of assessment at transnational teaching sites.*
10. *AUQA recommends that the College develop and implement a consistent policy with regard to the management of plagiarism and that this policy be adopted across all teaching sites, and be supported with the appropriate software.*

Raffles College will charge its Academic Board with responsibility to manage appropriate improvements in these areas.

11. *AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce continue to work actively on strengthening communication channels with both students and staff.*

Raffles has begun this work and recognises it is even more important in the light of increasing student numbers. Improvements in this area have been made the specific responsibility of the Registrar and the Heads of School.

12. AUQA recognises Raffles College of Design and Commerce's administration of the TEVAL survey to students, but recommends that the College needs to review the implementation of this process to ensure transparency in the management and feedback of the data to students and staff.

Raffles College will charge its Academic Board with responsibility to manage improvements in this area.

13. AUQA recommends that a systematic approach to the maintenance of all teaching equipment and facilities be adopted by the College.

The Senior Management Committee has been asked to review all issues related to facilities and equipment and will oversee the good management of purchase, replacement and repair.

14. AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce ensure that all students receive a copy of the student handbook and that it be treated as a primary instrument of quality assurance.

Raffles College's Student Handbook is available online and is constantly updated. But from this recommendation Raffles College draws the clear understanding that we need to ensure that all students have read and understood the importance of reading the handbook. The Raffles College Registrar will be responsible for making improvements in this area.

15. (urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce review current arrangements for quality assurance and carefully define its position regarding the relative responsibilities of the College and Raffles University for the assurance of academic quality and academic standards.

As AUQA notes the relationship with RU is only in its infancy and in fact many of the Raffles College activity that AUQA notes as being good practice have in fact come from the relationship with RU. Activities such as: moderation, site audits, staff development and curriculum development. As recommended by AUQA both Council and Academic Board will review and strengthen and improve this relationship.

16. AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce begin to develop and implement an approach to benchmarking.

17. (urgent) AUQA recommends that Raffles College of Design and Commerce ensure that all policies are disseminated throughout the organisation, and are fully implemented and monitored.

Raffles College will charge its newly constituted Council, the SMC and Academic Board with responsibility to manage improvements in both of these areas.