

Thematic Review Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

- (1) This Policy documents the process through which topical matters related to the University's academic activities can be made subject to review.
- (2) This Policy supports the assurance and enhancement of the quality, integrity, and relevance of the University's suite of award courses of study and non-award programs of study. It contributes to this goal by providing the mechanism by which identified issues can be examined, assured, and enhanced.
- (3) This Policy specifies the processes by which Academic Senate or the Vice-Chancellor can commission a thematic review.
- (4) This Policy is part of Stage 4 Monitoring of the Curriculum Lifecycle Framework and should be read in conjunction with all policies specific to this Stage and the Curriculum Lifecycle Framework.

Scope

- (5) This Policy applies to the University's educational products including all award courses of study and non-award programs of study.
- (6) Thematic reviews are reserved for issues that cannot be effectively addressed through other institutional processes.

Section 2 - Policy

- (7) Thematic review is a holistic approach to identify and remediate a specific issue of concern relating to academic activities. Thematic reviews are forward-looking and enhancement focused.
- (8) Thematic review is designed to:
 - a. enhance the student experience;
 - b. enhance institutional performance and practice;
 - c. secure whole-of-institution change through a focus on specific academic issues that are common across the University; and/or
 - d. draw on and share best practice from within the University and across the sector.
- (9) Thematic review is informed by:
 - a. transparent and coherent institutional processes;
 - b. institutionally agreed data points;
 - c. the latest pedagogical and professional developments in the area under inquiry;
 - d. external referencing, including benchmarking against national and international comparators;
 - e. a risk-based approach to decision making;

- f. an approach to the implementation of recommendations that is monitored by the relevant University authority;
- g. the feedback of students, staff, alumni, and industry when appropriate to the issue under investigation; and
- h. the judgements of Academic Senate and the University Executive Group.

Section 3 - Procedures

Part A - Commissioning Thematic Reviews

(10) Academic Senate can commission a thematic review within its area of responsibility and in accordance with delegations of authority, including where a recommendation is made by one of its sub-committees.

(11) The Vice-Chancellor can commission a review within their area of responsibility and in accordance with delegations of authority, including where a recommendation is made by the Executive Group or the Education Strategy Committee.

(12) The Vice-Chancellor will advise Academic Senate of any thematic review commissioned under the Vice-Chancellor's area of responsibility.

(13) A Thematic review is focused on one (1) theme with terms of reference and appointment of a panel set by Academic Senate or the Vice-Chancellor as relevant.

(14) The Thematic review process will be conducted through the approved University system.

(15) The Thematic Review Panel will be comprised of at least five (5) members, including:

- a. a senior academic or professional staff member who has subject matter expertise in the area under review and will act as the Chair;
- b. representation from each Faculty, and where appropriate, the Macquarie University College; and
- c. representation from the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor portfolio.

(16) The Thematic Review Panel may include students, alumni, professional or industry partners / organisations if deemed appropriate by the terms of reference or the judgement of Academic Senate or the Vice-Chancellor as relevant. In establishing the panel, consideration will be given to the diversity of its membership.

(17) The Thematic Review Panel Chair may also co-opt academic and professional staff to assist the review after seeking approval from the staff member's manager / supervisor.

(18) Academic Senate or the Vice-Chancellor as relevant, will ensure that resources required to complete the review are made available to the Thematic Review Panel Chair.

Part B - Conducting Thematic Reviews

(19) A Thematic review will be conducted in a manner that is most appropriate to the issue under review.

(20) The Thematic Review Panel will produce a set of commendations (if appropriate) and recommendations.

(21) Recommendations from an Academic Senate commissioned review will be submitted to the relevant sub-committee of Academic Senate for endorsement, prior to submission to Academic Senate for consideration / approval

(22) Recommendations from a Vice-Chancellor commissioned review will be submitted to the Education Strategy Committee or the Executive Group for endorsement, prior to submission to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration / approval.

(23) Approved recommendations will be implemented through a Thematic Review Success Plan.

(24) Following approval of the recommendations, the Thematic Review Panel will finalise a Thematic Review Success Plan.

(25) The Thematic Review Success Plan will identify the entity / entities that will be responsible for implementing the Success Plan.

(26) A Thematic Review Success Plan may trigger individual course or program specific Success or Action Plans to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.

(27) A Thematic Review Success Plan may trigger a course, course component or unit revision, a course in-cycle review, a course reaccreditation, or a course suspension or discontinuation (see relevant policies).

Part C - Implementation of Success Plan

(28) The committee / group that endorsed the recommendations of an approved Thematic Review will monitor the progress implementation of the Thematic Review Success Plan as a standing agenda item. The committee / group may request action from the entity / entities responsible for implementing the Thematic Review Success Plan to ensure timely completion of the actions.

(29) The entity / entities responsible for implementing the Thematic Success Plan will submit a final report to the relevant committee / group.

(30) The relevant committee / group will consider and endorse the final report and refer it to Academic Senate or the Vice-Chancellor as relevant.

(31) Where related to matters within its area of responsibility, and after consultation with the Chair, Academic Senate, Academic Senate will be provided with all or part of a final report from a Thematic Review commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor.

Part D - Responsibilities

(32) Responsibilities related to these Procedures are as follows:

- a. Academic Senate is responsible for commissioning thematic reviews within its area of responsibility and in accordance with delegations of authority and is responsible for approving the final report after the implementation of a Thematic Review Success Plan.
- b. the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for commissioning thematic reviews within their area of responsibility and in accordance with delegations of authority and is responsible for approving the final report after the implementation of a Thematic Review Success Plan.
- c. the Executive Group or the Education Strategy Committee may recommend a thematic review for the consideration of the Vice-Chancellor. The Executive Group or the Education Strategy Committee will endorse recommendations from a thematic review and will monitor progress and implementation of the Thematic Review Success Plan.
- d. the identified sub-committee of Academic Senate may recommend a thematic review for the consideration of Academic Senate. The identified sub-committee will endorse recommendations from a thematic review and will monitor progress and implementation of the Thematic Review Success Plan. The following sub-committees of Academic Senate may act in accordance with this Policy:
 - i. Academic Senate Standing Committee;
 - ii. Academic Standards and Quality Committee;

- iii. Higher Doctoral Degrees Committee;
- iv. Research and Research Training Committee; and
- v. Senate Learning and Teaching Committee.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(33) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(34) Commonly defined terms are located in the University [Glossary](#). The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Action Plan means the plan developed by the authorised unit authority to address issues highlighted as a result of the unit monitoring or unit periodic review processes.
- b. Award Courses of Study is a sequence of learning that culminates in a qualification within the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#).
- c. Commendation means a Thematic Review Panel acknowledgment of excellence to a course or non-award program as demonstrated against the relevant domains and inputs during the Thematic review phase.
- d. Curriculum Lifecycle Framework charts the journey of an award course, course component or unit from idea to disestablishment, including the processes and policies for their accreditation, revision, monitoring and review, and reaccreditation. It can also be applied to non-award educational products that still require institutional oversight such as short courses including not for credit micro-credentials.
- e. Education Strategy Committee is a sub-committee of Executive Group. It provides input and support in the development of a vision for education and execution of an education strategy.
- f. Educational Products are the award courses of study and non-award programs of study offered by the University.
- g. Non-award program of study is a sequence of learning that does not culminate in a qualification with the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#).
- h. Recommendation means an action resulting from a review process where a panel and/or other authority provide a course of action based on the evaluation of the submission against domains, data and/or other supporting resources.
- i. Success Plan means the plan developed by the authorised course authority to address issues highlighted as a result of review process.

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