Educational Quality Assurance System at RMIT

A Handbook

Teaching and Learning Strategy Committee
Educational Quality Review Committee

July 1997

(Amended with online framework, December 1998 addition of good practice)
Educational Quality Assurance System at RMIT

A Handbook

This handbook was written and complied by Joan Benjamin and Louise Bricknell of the Educational Program Improvement Group, July 1997

Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amendments</th>
<th>Amended Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>Introduction of good practice frameworks as part of course team improvement processes. Addition of the good practice framework for RMIT online learning environments. Specific references to good practice frameworks in advice and proformas for course teams and reviewers.</td>
<td>New Appendix 12. Additions to: • Glossary • Sections 1.1.3, 2.4, 2.4.1, 3.3.2. • Appendix 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>Replacement of EQAC by EQRC</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>EQRC Membership</td>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>1998 Course Quality Review Report</td>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

The Educational Quality Assurance system reflects RMIT’s commitment to student-centred learning, enhanced learning outcomes for students and continual course quality improvement. It plays a vital role in supporting staff implementing the Teaching and Learning Strategy and in demonstrating accountability to all stakeholders in RMIT.

Adopted in the higher education sector in 1994, the EQA system has recently been reviewed, leading to reaffirmation of its underlying principles and its extension to vocational education and training courses, short courses and other educational programs. It is the quality assurance system for all teaching and learning at the University.

The review of EQA has had two other critical outcomes. First, EQA is now integrated into the strategic planning and implementation processes of courses and Faculties, these processes being focused on the Teaching and Learning Strategy. Second, following comments from many course teams, the capacity of the system to be part of ongoing team processes has been enhanced. So, for example, the EPQM file has been removed and a much more accessible and flexible electronic log is available for course teams.

I reaffirm the commitment made in the handbook to continued improvement of the EQA system. Your comments and suggestions on any aspect of EQA are welcome: contact me, your Faculty Director of Teaching Quality or the Chairs of the two sponsoring committees, Professor Helen Praetz and Professor Terry Roberts.

Quality assurance is one of the key factors in the continuing success of RMIT. I urge you to approach your reading of this handbook as an opportunity to further develop the quality improvement processes in your courses.

Ruth Dunkin
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Training)
‘Two years ago, in 1995, we didn't know what a CQI was. We were reactive to the audit team because we didn't know what was being looked for. Now we do and we organise our material in a way that reflects that, and reflects the Teaching and Learning Strategy and Strategic Plans. We wouldn’t have done that two years ago but we wouldn't think of not doing that now.’

Leader, course Review in 1995

RMIT’s goal is to create and sustain a distinctive world-class university at the forefront of technical and professional education and real-world research, through continuous improvement and with all staff committed to quality management processes.

RMIT Strategic Plan 1997–2002
Acknowledgements

Change is always exciting, frustrating, anxiety-provoking and illuminating. The development and implementation of RMIT’s Educational Quality Assurance system has all these attributes and more. All those who have been involved in the process to date have experienced the frustrations involved in covering new ground, the satisfaction of solving problems and the pleasure that comes with shared learning. It is hoped that this handbook reflects these often contradictory yet compatible experiences, through the contributions of educational quality Reviewers, course members and leaders, administrative staff, Directors of Teaching Quality and members of the Educational Quality Review Committee.

In particular the writers are indebted to John Bowden, Patrick Boyle and Elaine Martin for the many documents concerning EQA at RMIT. Moreover, we acknowledge the significant contribution made by John Bowden and Patrick Boyle in initiating the EQA system at RMIT. This handbook builds on the materials developed by John and Patrick for the Reviewers and course leaders involved in the first two rounds of EQA at RMIT. Most of these primary sources were published in Understanding RMIT’s Approach to Educational Quality Assurance, which is now out of print. For ease of reading, in this handbook they are not referenced individually.

The members of the Educational Quality Review Committee and the Teaching and Learning Strategy Committee have contributed recent changes to the EQA system. All have been incorporated in this handbook.

The writers wish to thank the following for their contributions to this handbook: Marilyn Baird, Sonia Gilderdale, Carmen Heliotis, Lindsay Heywood, Graham Hubbard, Robyn Lines, Ian McBean, Malcolm McCormick, Janet Medd, John Milton, Helen Praetz, Ern Reeders, Terry Roberts, Andrea Rosewarne, Sue Scarlett, Marie Sierra, Olympia Watkins and Jerry Winston.

Kay Waters cast a constructively critical editorial eye over this handbook while Denise Jacobs ably did the desktop publishing.

And lastly, for typing many drafts, and for her forbearance, Helen Lennox.

This document will be available electronically. Please feel free to copy any section of this document that will assist in the continued improvement of student learning at RMIT.
# Glossary and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Course Advisory Committee; membership comprises members of the course team, head of department, student representative and members of the relevant professional field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CADU</td>
<td>Curriculum and Academic Development Unit; part of the Educational Program Improvement Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCQI cycle, CQI cycle cycle</td>
<td>Continual course quality improvement cycle: the planned and systematic activities undertaken by course teams to improve the quality of student learning outcomes and implement the Teaching and Learning Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course log (the log)</td>
<td>The collection of documents and evidence generated by a course team as it engages in and improves the conduct of its learning program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course teams</td>
<td>The members of academic staff involved in delivering a particular academic program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Quality Review, Course Quality Review Team</td>
<td>RMIT courses are reviewed each five years by a panel of peer Reviewers who report to the Educational Quality Review Committee (EQRC). Prior to 1997 this process was referred to as the Course Audit and conducted by our Audit Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoTQ</td>
<td>Director of Teaching Quality attached to each RMIT Faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSS</td>
<td>Electronic Data Summary system (previously the EPQM, Educational Program Quality Management File), since replaced with a more accessible format available through Netscape. A summary version of the documentation of CQI available electronically to all members of the course team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Group</td>
<td>Educational Program Improvement Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQA system</td>
<td>Educational Quality Assurance system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQRC</td>
<td>Educational Quality Review Committee, a Standing Committee of Academic Board and, in future, the Board of Technical Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Reviewer</td>
<td>A member of the RMIT academic community who has been selected and trained to work with peers on other course teams as part of the RMIT EQA system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflective practice</td>
<td>The act of documenting, evaluating and reflecting on practice, in order to learn about and improve practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Coordinator</td>
<td>A member of the Review Team who acts as the liaison between EQRC, the course team and the Review Team and coordinates the activities of the Review Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific monitoring</td>
<td>At the completion of a Course Quality Review a series of recommendations may be made to a course team. These will be subject to specific monitoring at an identified time by the Review Coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>Student/Staff Consultative Committee; comprises student representatives and key members of the teaching staff, providing an opportunity for student contribution to the development and organisation of a specific course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan</td>
<td>The RMIT Strategic Plan establishes a framework of processes through which RMIT intends to meet its mission during the next five years. It is updated annually. Faculty and departmental planning occurs within this framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Strategy</td>
<td>RMIT has developed relevant strategies, indicators and targets that focus teaching and course development on the development of graduates who are knowledgeable, critical, creative, responsible and employable and potential leaders in their fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy</td>
<td>Faculties, departments and courses have adapted the RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy to reflect local priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good practice Frameworks</td>
<td>The frameworks mentioned in this manual have been adopted by RMIT as guidelines for course teams (and Review Teams) to assist with planning, developing and reviewing educational developments as part of the course improvement processes and EQA system more generally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Contents**

**FOREWORD**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**CONTENTS**

**PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. **IMPLEMENTING COURSE IMPROVEMENT**
   1.1 The RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy
      1.1.1 Introducing Change for Improvement
      1.1.2 Continual Course Quality Improvement
      1.1.3 Evaluation of Courses
   1.2 Course Teams
      1.2.1 Size and Composition of Course Teams
   1.3 Support Available to Course Teams for Course Quality Improvement Activities

2. **DOCUMENTING COURSE IMPROVEMENT**
   2.1 Documents Generated by Course Team Activities
   2.2 The Course Log
   2.3 Getting Started on Your Course Log
   2.4 Steps to Continual Course Quality Improvement
      2.4.1 Develop a Systematic Approach to Course Quality Improvement

3. **REVIEWING COURSE IMPROVEMENT**
   3.1 Role and Responsibility of EQRC
      3.1.1 Establishing the Review of a Course
      3.1.2 Selection and Training of Reviewers
      3.1.3 Qualities and Expertise Required of a Reviewer
      3.1.4 Acting on Course Review Reports
   3.2 Sequence of Course Quality Review Activities
Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is intended as a practical resource to help course teams throughout RMIT engage in a process of learning about student learning through reflective practice. It has been designed to assist course teams in working through the processes of course quality improvement which are focused on the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy. RMIT courses are designed, delivered and managed to provide learning opportunities that will develop knowledgeable, creative, critical, responsible and employable graduates who are life-long learners and potential leaders. The handbook also details the way in which these processes are systematically reviewed.

In this way the handbook describes the complete Educational Quality Assurance system which now applies to all educational programs at RMIT.

Structure of the handbook

Section 1 deals with course quality improvement within the context of the Teaching and Learning Strategy. It describes the elements of course quality improvement, how course teams can work together, and the nature of the course log, and draws upon the experiences of course teams at RMIT.

Section 2 provides course teams with ideas and resources for the organisation and documentation of their improvement strategies. It includes resources developed by course teams at RMIT.

Section 3 explains the elements of the Course Quality Review process from the perspectives of the Educational Quality Review Committee, the Course Quality Review team and course teams.

The appendices contain the latest information, guidelines and templates to assist course team leaders in preparing for the Course Quality Review and to assist Review Teams in conducting the Review. These will be updated from time to time.
Suggestions for improvement

Many of the ideas in this handbook have been contributed by course teams. Educational quality assurance at RMIT is a dynamic entity, evolving and improving as it goes. It is intended that this handbook will reflect these changes as they occur. You can help in this process by contributing ideas and suggestion that have worked for your course teams; this will enable us to enlarge the collection and to keep the material current. There is an evaluation and suggestion sheet at the end of the handbook to assist your contribution.
Introduction

E.L. Boyer, in *Scholarship Reconsidered*, notes that ‘...good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners’. The RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy identifies that staff will engage in scholarly practice related to their teaching, by:

- listening to students and actively learning from them;
- continually improving professional practice through reflection, discussion and innovation;
- actively searching for new ways to help students to learn; and
- seeking opportunities to share ideas with other teachers.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy also stipulates that ‘All RMIT courses will demonstrate...quality assurance and continual quality improvement principles and practices in teaching and learning, assessment and course management.’ This handbook is designed to support this process.

There is now a considerable body of literature that suggests that organisational excellence comes through organisational learning which Peter Senge describes in the following way:

> The organisations that will truly excel in the future will be organisations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation. They will be learning organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.

Organisations become learning organisations through individuals who learn. The Educational Quality Assurance (EQA) system at RMIT incorporates a quality improvement process directed at course level, which is designed to provide an opportunity for staff to learn as they improve student learning opportunities and develop the documentary evidence that improvement in student learning outcomes is taking place. Educational Quality Assurance at RMIT is a process of continual improvement based on evaluating and learning from experience, enabling RMIT to become a ‘learning organisation’, where our students find learning accessible and effective and where we, their teachers, are able to learn together in ways that will improve our practice.

---

Recent changes to the Educational Quality Assurance (EQA) system have led to its integration with the strategic planning, implementation and review processes of RMIT at course, Faculty and University levels (see Suggested Further Reading). Clearly, course teams play a key role in effecting RMIT’s strategic priorities. Now, EQA provides a much clearer framework for course teams to align their efforts in a manner which benefits all in the institution. Moreover, through EQA, course teams provide vital contributions to the Teaching and Learning Strategy Review process and help shape strategic directions for RMIT. In this way the University itself ‘learns’ from the experiences and successes of course teams.

Central to the design of educational quality assurance at RMIT is the assumption that the best people to recognise the quality of a process are those who practice it, hence the centrality of peer review to RMIT’s Educational Quality Assurance process.

As Bowden and Boyle indicate, RMIT’s EQA system incorporates two objectives. First, the autonomy of the professional is maintained. Second, RMIT is able to demonstrate publicly that it operates through processes of evaluation, reflection and improvement – in other words, that it can account clearly for its activities and demonstrate their benefit to the wider Australian community. These two objectives are expressed through continual course quality improvement.

The EQA system also provides accountability mechanisms throughout RMIT and in the wider community. These mechanisms include the conduct of Educational Quality Reviews and involve the many stakeholders in RMIT through representative committees, culminating with a reporting process through Academic Board to Council and, thence, to the community.

Times of continual change and uncertainty create a sense of dislocation for many. The RMIT focus on course teams collaborating for continual improvement in student learning has the potential to replace uncertainty, fragmentation and a sense of powerlessness with a holistic focus, proactive relationships, group autonomy and the opportunity for learning and changing attitudes and practice. The RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy provides the focus and direction for this improvement process in a challenging external environment. This handbook has been written to help course teams realise this potential.

---

1. Implementing Course Improvement

1.1 The RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy

Tertiary education at RMIT is now framed by a Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Strategy encompasses principles and practices that aim to achieve the best possible learning environment for all members of the RMIT community, and reflects the university’s strategic priorities. Many of these principles guide the approach that RMIT takes to quality assurance:

All RMIT courses will demonstrate:

- an appropriate balance in meeting stakeholders’ needs; and
- quality assurance and continual quality improvement principles and practices in teaching and learning, assessment and course management.

RMIT expects teaching staff at all levels, as facilitators of the learning process, to:

- listen to students and learn from them;
- have a commitment and a desire to share their field of expertise and its relevance to professional practice;
- use a variety of teaching strategies, carefully chosen to facilitate intended learning outcomes;
- examine, evaluate and select emerging technologies in order to improve student learning;
- continually improve professional practice through reflection, discussion and innovation, and actively search for new ways to help students to learn; and
- seek opportunities to share ideas with other teachers.

(Excerpts from *Teaching and Learning at RMIT: Philosophy and Principles*, July 1995.)

These principles suggest a dynamic of change, of reflecting on practice, on the internal and external environments and on our students, and learning from this reflective process, learning how best to improve what we do. The course team is the part of the university most closely concerned with the implementation of the RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy and is thus the focus of the EQA system. It is during the course team planning and evaluating processes that the documentary evidence necessary for quality assurance is generated. This material becomes the basis of the Course Quality Review.

Each Faculty has developed a Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy that reflects the RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy and incorporates the aspirations and concerns of that Faculty. These local Teaching and Learning Strategies in turn provide a basis for course teams as they develop and improve their courses.
1.1.1 INTRODUCING CHANGE FOR IMPROVEMENT
Ideas for action to improve courses and student learning can arise from a wide range of sources, including:

- consideration of Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategies;
- issues raised through the Student/Staff Consultative Committee;
- contributions from practitioner members of the relevant professional field through the Course Advisory Committee;
- reports from employer bodies;
- a staff member returning from a conference with an innovation to adapt and trial;
- student feedback from subject evaluations indicating an emerging pattern of concern or an innovation that students would like to see applied more widely in their course;
- research findings in the field of tertiary teaching and learning that indicate different ways of providing enhanced learning opportunities for students;
- an idea mentioned by a student to a member of the course team;
- review of Course Performance Indicators and Course Experience Questionnaire data;
- a specific survey or consultation commissioned by a course team to map changes in their field of expertise in order to develop new subjects or change existing ones;
- recent graduates who have been surveyed on the relevance of particular aspects of courses, or employers on the kinds of generic skills they are looking for in graduates; and
- recommendations from the most recent Quality Review.

These issues may emerge at any time or as a result of a specific review and planning process; they may become a catalyst for initiating a planned sequence of activities, which will form the basis for a continual course quality improvement cycle. The course quality improvement cycle is the principal focus for the Review Team. The Review Team will report to the RMIT Educational Quality Review Committee (EQRC) on the nature of the course team’s activities in relation to course quality improvement activities (refer to Section 3 of this handbook).

1.1.2 CONTINUAL COURSE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
Continual quality improvement of a subject or other course-related activity is the name applied to a planned sequence of systematic and documented activities aimed at improving student learning and the quality and relevance of the course overall. The course quality improvement cycle simply reflects current course team good practice. The activities in course quality improvement cycles include:

Implicit in this concept of quality improvement is the idea of continual planned activity to improve existing practice, with particular reference to the quality of student learning.
• **Reflection** on, and interpretation of, relevant information (usually including evaluative information) concerning aspects of a course such as student assessment, performance and progress; work experience; graduate attributes; student selection criteria; liaison with professional bodies; subject review, and intended course outcomes. This information should be drawn from as wide a range of sources as possible – in particular, the various stakeholder groups associated with a particular course.

• **Decision making** – determining what action is needed to improve practices, objectives and, ultimately, outcomes.

• **Implementation** of the new practice or design.

• **Monitoring** of the innovation and recording of observations and results.

• **Evaluation** – building in strategies during the planning phase to collect evidence of the nature of the outcomes resulting from the change, enabling judgements to be made about the effectiveness of the improvement process. Judgement is arrived at as a result of reflection, thus forming the continual improvement cycle.

Following is an example of course quality improvement activities taken from recent audits (now referred to as Course Reviews) of courses at RMIT.

In 1986 the Department of Fashion and Textile Design began to survey graduated students in April and May of their first year post university. The survey was designed to ascertain employment patterns, the degree to which graduates felt that subjects equipped them personally and professionally for their particular field of employment, the relevance of particular subjects, and clusters of subjects, for particular fields of employment within the industry. (This aspect provides information that is particularly helpful in advising students of the relevance of particular subjects to their vocational aspirations.) These surveys were carefully studied by staff to detect emerging trends. These trends were written up to form the starting point of the reflection and discussion process that leads ultimately to innovation. A deliberative process of reflection, decision-making and implementation began, and was cycled through the three decision making committees of the Department.

The data from this survey, considered over several years, enabled the course team to identify gaps in curriculum – for example, giving a subject less emphasis to make way for something new.

The data from the graduate survey enabled staff to see that a subject to equip students to work with computer-aided design was a growing requirement in their particular industry. However, the introduction of this course component needed to be carefully considered as it involved considerable resources. Introduced initially at first year, it soon became apparent that the subject should become a core second-year subject as well. Such an innovation has implications for the continuing equilibrium of the course and is being continually and carefully evaluated. Key areas for this ongoing evaluation included:

• the effectiveness of new timetabling arrangements;
• the quality of student learning;
• staff and student perceptions, and consideration of actual results;
• subject evaluation feedback from students; and
• student progress rates.

Consideration of this data led the team to start another cycle of reflection, evaluation, action, and so on. The Student/Staff Consultative Committee provides a forum where students can offer comment and reflection at the course level. Student feedback at the individual subject level is also another important source of evidence.
1.1.3 EVALUATION OF COURSES
Evaluation is central to continual quality improvement. It is only through the collection and consideration of relevant and valid evidence that it becomes possible to exercise appropriate judgement. There are many excellent texts available on the evaluation process, including the document (currently in preparation) by Professor Elaine Martin of the Curriculum and Academic Development Unit, *Evaluating Teaching and Courses at RMIT*.

To know how well the organisation and content of a course is achieving its stated learning outcomes, it is vital to be able to identify a need that has not previously been recognised. Some important course innovations have resulted from studies of emerging trends in the profession or from course team consideration of student feedback.

**Key questions to guide the evaluation process**
At the simplest level our evaluation activities should ask and be able to answer the following questions:
- What is the student experience of learning within this course?
- What shapes the student experience?
- What is the outcome of student learning in this course?
- How can we improve the student experience?
- How can we develop processes to ensure a continual improvement process?
- How can we document the improvement process?

The Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities provide a focus for these six questions.

**RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities**
- Balancing stakeholders' needs
- Quality assurance and continual improvement
- Vocational focus
- Graduate attributes
- Student-centred approach to teaching and learning
- Maximising student choice of content and learning
- Assessment practices
- Internationalisation of the curriculum
- Supporting full fee paying overseas students and students studying off-shore.
- Access and equity
- Multiple course entry and exit points
- Valuing staff for their teaching
In the past, course teams may have referred to the EQRC-developed Key Components. These have been replaced by the Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities.

In addition, course teams refer to the RMIT Course Performance Indicators approved by Academic Board and by Faculty Boards. These indicators of quality and market demand for courses can be explained by your Faculty Director of Teaching Quality. They reflect the necessity for the University to ensure that all courses at RMIT be of a high standard and in demand by prospective students.

The indicators are an aspect of the University's determination of the profile of programs it offers. Faculties determine the indicators annually and Course Leaders will have an opportunity to respond (documented in the course log). In a similar way, course teams will need to respond to the Course Experience Questionnaire data.

Similarly as part of the improvement processes course teams should refer to endorsed good practice frameworks (Appendix 12). So, for example, course teams refurbishing an aspect of their courses to include flexibly delivered courseware should refer to the good practice framework for RMIT online learning environments.

**A course quality improvement process**
An evaluation process focusing on course quality improvement would consist of the following activities:

- **Reflection** – Develop and decide upon appropriate teaching and course criteria within the framework of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy; identify potential indicators of these criteria.
  Developing a broad statement of goals is an important first step, but there is no need to evaluate on all fronts at once. It is legitimate for the teaching team to discuss what each evaluation should focus on: perhaps one aspect of the course or subject which is seen to be problematic, and another aspect which appears to be relatively successful.
- **Decision making** – The initiative is approved by the various decision making groups related to the course.
- **Implementation** – The initiative is put into practice.
- **Monitoring** – The new processes are carefully observed in terms of the agreed indicators and outcomes, and documentary evidence is collected.
- **Evaluation** – The evidence from a variety of sources is collated, to allow judgements to be made about performance against a range of indicators.
- **Reflection** – The course team considers what the collected evidence means, what must be attended to and how, and what actions must be taken.
• **Change** – Decisions are taken as to what has to be changed, and the changes are implemented.

• **Re-evaluation** – A check is made as to whether the changes have achieved the intended outcomes. The next stage of the improvement cycle begins.

Reflection and action are most effective when carried out as a collaborative activity, where the members of a teaching team are able to bring their collective experience and expertise to bear on the process. Collaboration, cooperation and partnership are important EQA values. Evaluation that encompasses collaborative values at the course team level can contribute to enhanced learning among the participants, and greater accountability. Generating documentation in a collaborative way will help ensure that:

• the documents make sense to the course team and to others;
• the documents provide evidence of improvement and are not merely a documentation of intention;
• the documents demonstrate the nature of the evaluative activities that have taken place;
• there are clearly identifiable links between the documents;
• the documentation is related to the student’s experience of the courses;
• course teams operate with a sense of continuity despite staff changes caused by long service, study leave, new staff, retirement and so on;
• records will be available for individual academics who teach subjects on an alternative semester basis; and
• innovative ideas, thoughts and discussions can be developed and documented.

**1.2 Course Teams**

Throughout this document there is reference to the course team. In the past there has been a tendency for development activities to be focused at the level of an individual academic or a specific subject. However, students experience an educational program as a whole, not as subjects in isolation. The student expects to complete their study with a set of professionally relevant attributes reflecting their specific award program. The Teaching and Learning Strategy and the EQA system both consider the whole student experience, not merely the component parts. Therefore, the focus needs to be on whole-part relationships, and academic staff who teach in a particular educational program must communicate with each other, plan the program together, and address the improvement process collaboratively. (See the section below on size and composition of course teams.)
While the term ‘course team’ may appear new, the fact that staff work together in groups is not. Furthermore, staff involved in tertiary education are used to working with other people towards a common goal. The common goal for the course team is to implement the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy in relation to a particular educational program. By focusing on initiatives and cycles that effect the common goal rather than, for example, individual subjects, staff experience the course as a whole, as do the students. Students may well prefer one subject to another, but their overall perspective is formed on how these subjects are linked, how all the parts will equip them for their current and/or future career.

This holistic perspective is important to the ‘change for improvement’ process because changes in one part of the program will affect another part. The changes could be in a fieldwork component section of the course, or in subjects offered by another department, but the net result will be the same: a change in the teaching and learning environment, and therefore a change in the overall student experience of the course.

'Really, students say they like this, don't like that, can't see why this should fit in here, and this happens all the time, but at the end over here when they've finished, they're happy with it. As a whole they're happy with it and that's the feedback we're getting. The course as a whole, put together like that, yes, they experience that positively and that's what we need to look at.'
(Course Leader, reviewed, 1995)

1.2.1 SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF COURSE TEAMS
If the philosophy guiding the use of course teams is based on understanding students’ experiences of programs as a whole rather than as isolated units, then what a course team is, and who makes up the team should reflect this. This, in turn, has implications for the size and function of the team. Course teams have approached this problem in a number of ways that satisfy the particular requirements of their course. Consideration needs to be given to processes that will include all staff, whether part-time or full-time, service teachers and those involved in core teaching. No single formula will suit all courses. It may be necessary in some cases to budget for payment to sessional staff to attend planning days or regular staff meetings. The use of electronic technology can solve some of these problems, particularly if a course or part of it is taught off-shore. The most important element to consider in the workings of course teams is that they be as inclusive as possible.
Just as there is no single size or composition for a course team, there is also no single way in which course teams should go about their task at RMIT or at any other university. However, there are some qualities that effective course teams have in common:

- a clearly articulated view of their course, and of the graduate attributes they are working to develop;
- a shared acceptance of the value of the common task;
- a shared belief in the value of collaborative practice and collaborative learning;
- support and mentoring of new members of the course team as an everyday occurrence;
- open and inclusive decision-making processes;
- task-focused meetings that centre on learning and action;
- adequate time for joint planning and evaluation;
- decision making taking place after collaborative analysis, reflective examination of alternatives and the development of clearly articulated outcomes;
- the sharing of responsibility for outcomes by the whole team;
- the attitude that every member’s contribution is valuable and that each member can learn from, and support, the others, particularly in taking advantage of staff development opportunities.

1.3 Support Available to Course Teams for Course Quality Improvement Activities

The Directors of Teaching Quality in each Faculty have a particular responsibility to assist course teams with both continual course improvements and the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy, and will be able to provide advice and support to course teams.

The Educational Program Improvement Group, has considerable expertise in the areas of:

- evaluation;
- subject and course improvement;
- practices to support the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy;
- all aspects of the EQA system;
- staff support and development.
Staff members are able to act as consultants to both individual teachers and course teams, and will welcome your enquiries.

As well as providing training for Course Quality Reviewers and for course leaders approaching their first Course Quality Review, EPI offers a range of workshops during the year. These address issues such as evaluation, course teams and course quality improvement, and the use of a flexible electronic system for the housing of the course log and a range of teaching-related activities.

In addition, we suggest you talk to other course teams and see how they undertake their continual course improvement activities.

Section 3 of this handbook contains information to help course teams prepare for the Course Quality Review.
2. Documenting Course Improvement

2.1 Documents Generated by Course Team Activities

The documentation of activities related to course improvement and course development is not new for academic staff. Prior to the introduction of the EQA system at RMIT, the main course documentation was the Course Reaccreditation document, and changes to the course in the period between accreditations were subject to Academic or Faculty Board approval. This material would have been stored centrally at Department or Faculty level. Other documentation may also have been housed in the same place, but often it remained in the filing cabinets of the staff who generated it or were responsible for it – this was often, but not always, the Course Leader. Certainly the analyses or summaries of subject evaluations conducted by individual staff were rarely housed centrally.

The introduction of the EQA system at RMIT has required course teams to collect documents from a range of locations, assess their contemporary relevance, identify them, reference them and house them within a framework that creates an accessible and coherent record of improvement practices for a particular course. Consequently, course teams now have access to not only a comprehensive history of their course but also valuable planning material.

Further, the EQA system requires that the arrangement of the material conform to a framework that will facilitate the Review process. Increasingly, course teams are developing organising frameworks based on their Teaching and Learning Strategy (recently reinforced by the adoption of the Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities in place of what had been known as Key Components).

One of the principles of the Teaching and Learning Strategy is the balancing of stakeholder interests and needs. Each of these stakeholder groups will generate documents of value to course teams. The Educational Quality Review Committee has developed a list of document types with a set of abbreviations to help identification of these different forums across the university and to help future Review Teams navigate course logs. These lists are designed to assist staff in covering all the essential elements of a course in their improvement processes, and to consult with all the appropriate stakeholders. The lists have undergone several revisions since they were first developed in 1995, and are likely to continue to do so. The most up-to-date version is available from the Faculty Director of Teaching Quality.
2.2 The Course Log

This is the record of the activities of the course team, and the documentary evidence that is generated by a course team as it goes about its work of planning, implementing and evaluating student learning experiences. The log documents developments and improvements in courses, as well as reporting on course management issues. It contains only those documents that are relevant to the continual quality improvement and management of the course. This record is an important resource for the teaching teams, as well as evidence of the process of quality improvement. A course team may determine that an entire course log will be created and housed electronically (subject, of course, to the group being comfortable in that medium), or it may use a combination of mediums. Increasingly, the documentation will be housed electronically using the electronic data summary system.

Creating the log is probably one of the most time-consuming aspects of the continual quality improvement process. Its maintenance, however, easily becomes part of everyday practice. The following comments provide an insight into a Course Leader’s perceptions of this activity.

'The initial development of the log was a one-person job. Basically I rejigged all the existing files into categories that were congruent with the EQA system. In the early stages of the log development there was a lot of duplication because I was not terribly good at linking between documents. But our system has since improved; we have developed a template and it has been through several revisions and this has provided a way of linking documents...

The process of doing it (creating the log) has given me a very thorough overview of the course. It gave me a greater insight into the course as a whole than I had prior to the process. Its continuing existence has already proved to be a useful resource for other members of the course team. Already it has assisted us in identifying areas that required attention as other team members begin to use it.

As a result of this process we now record our activities differently. Prior to this development all our meetings were minuted in the normal way, but for the purposes of planning and evaluation these minutes were not always helpful. Our records now show:
- the intended action;
- the time line for completion;
- the expected outcomes; and
- the person(s) responsible.

This process has also sharpened everyone’s understanding about what is going on a continuing basis. We do not find it as necessary to hold an overview session as a separate event. We now all have an overview of the course as a whole and not just the subject or area for which we have a particular responsibility.’

Andrea Rosewarne, Course Leader, Graduate Diploma in Intellectual Disability Studies.
Another commented,

‘Two years ago, in 1995, we didn’t know what a CQI was. We were reactive to the audit team because we didn’t know what was being looked for. Now we do and we organise our material in a way that reflects that. And it reflects the Teaching and Learning Strategy and Strategic Plans. We wouldn’t have done that two years ago but we wouldn’t think of not doing that now. These things have been useful but if there is a weakness in the system it is the computer system or EPQM and the greater need, at Faculty level anyway, of being able to discuss things like the Teaching and Learning Strategy and how they relate to you. There needs to be a greater sense of ownership of these things.’

Course teams are encouraged to develop an organising framework that will adequately document their reflective practice, their evaluation strategies, and the evidence that these activities generate in a way that is useful to their continual course improvement processes. The Course Quality Review process requires that the documentation be accessible and clearly demonstrate the course team’s process of ongoing reflection, evaluation, reflection, change and re-evaluation, with the focus on implementing the Teaching and Learning Strategy. It will be necessary for each course team to develop a mechanism to link relevant documents. As documents relevant to an improvement cycle may well be generated over several years and involve different forums of stakeholders, it is vital that the relationships between these documents be identified and be easily accessed. The recently developed flexible electronic educational log system is intended as a support to course team activities and is particularly useful in tracking improvement cycles through various documents. The importance of identifying relationships between documents underpins the need for improvement processes to be undertaken collaboratively by course teams.

The two documents that will be of most assistance to the Course Quality Review team will be the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy that results from the annual review and planning process, and the Course Leader’s annual report. It is important that both these documents identify and reference the documents relevant to particular course quality improvement cycles. Guidelines for the preparation of both documents can be found in Appendices 8 and 9.

2.3 Getting Started on Your Course Log

Course logs comprise documents that are relevant to the continual quality improvement of the course and to the management of the course. When establishing your log for the first time or reviewing it prior to a Course Quality Review, it is useful to identify continual improvement cycles that are currently relevant.

Locate the documents relevant to particular cycles and identify relationships between documents:

- strategy documents
• minutes
• Performance Indicators and Course Experience Questionnaire
• Course Leaders’ annual reports
• record of team/department planning days
• minutes of student progress/course review and planning days
• analysis of student feedback
• analysis of industry/employer surveys
• planning and evaluation of course changes
• subject evaluations and developments.

Decide how best to organise:
• section headings (sections should relate to Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities, as appropriate);
• linking mechanisms;
• documents into headings;
• cross references to relevant documents;
• indexes for documents according to the codes developed as part of the framework;
• where and how will the course log is housed should ensure that course team access is facilitated;
• the coding system; and
• a summary index document (for what you are working on now but haven’t collated).

2.4 Steps to Continual Course Quality Improvement

Course teams have reported that the process of developing their course logs has helped them to develop a more coherent overview of the course and a more certain knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.

Reflect on the processes of establishing a course log:
• What have you learned about the course review, planning and evaluation mechanisms and activities?
• What aspects of the course receive the most attention?
• What aspects of the course are not covered in the documentation?
• Does the documentation reflect the changes occurring in the field/profession/industry?

Evaluate the course on the basis of the evidence it provides:
• To what extent have the Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities been addressed within the recent planning activities of the course team?
• What are the course priorities for planning improvement and change?
• Refer to good practice frameworks, Appendix 12, for example, the good practice framework for RMIT online learning environments.

*Establish course priorities for improvement:*
• Refer to the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy for key faculty directions and initiatives.
• Refer to evaluation materials from all stakeholders in relation to current course strategies.
• Refer to professional associations and industry trends.
• Review minutes of the Course Advisory Committee, and the Student/Staff Consultative Committee.
• Determine course and team key priorities for the year (strategic plan).

*Allocate evaluation/development tasks to work groups.*

*Develop action plans for course quality improvement and timelines to address course priorities.*

**2.4.1 DEVELOP A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO COURSE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

Course teams are encouraged to take a systematic and scholarly approach to course quality improvement. As part of this process, course teams will find it helpful to refer to established good practice principles and frameworks—including those noted in Appendix 12. They are a useful reference tool at each key stage of the improvement cycle: evaluation, reflection, planning and implementation.

*Evaluation:*
• Need to collect data from many sources, and identify the possibilities.
• Need for data collection to be interactive where appropriate – allow answers to generate additional questions.
• Refer to Evaluating Teaching and Courses at RMIT by Elaine Martin, available from EPI Group.
Reflection:
• Data to be reviewed, discussed and conclusions drawn, collaboratively.
• New outcomes, objectives discussed and agreed.

Planning:
• Data to be reviewed, discussed and conclusions drawn, collaboratively.
• New outcomes, objectives discussed and agreed.
• Intended outcomes identified in detail.
• Timelines agreed.

Implementation:
• Practice, program outcomes monitored and recorded.
• Evaluation targetted towards the intended impact of the initiative.
3. Reviewing Course Improvement

3.1 Role and Responsibility of EQRC

The Educational Quality Review Committee is a Standing Committee of Academic Board with responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the educational quality improvement processes across the university through a planned sequence of Course Quality Reviews. Refer to Appendix I for the membership of EQRC at the time of writing.

3.1.1 ESTABLISHING THE REVIEW OF A COURSE

The Educational Quality Review Committee has surveyed all courses offered by RMIT and established a timetable for educational Quality Course Reviews that will ensure that each course will normally be reviewed once every five years, commencing with those courses which under the previous course accreditation system, would be due for course re-accreditation (now called 'quality registration'). This timetable has been made available to the Faculties (refer to your Director of Teaching Quality).

In the case of a Course Review, the relevant Dean, Head of Department and Course Leader are notified early in the preceding year that a specific course will be reviewed.

3.1.2 SELECTION AND TRAINING OF REVIEWERS

Towards the end of the academic year, EQRC requests that the Directors of Teaching Quality in each of the faculties nominate members of academic staff who are suitably qualified, and available, to fulfil the role of Reviewer for a two-year term. Reviewers are selected on the basis of demonstrated qualities and areas of expertise with which they will enhance both the evaluative and developmental aspects of the Course Review. The training program is provided by the Educational Program Improvement Group.

3.1.3 QUALITIES AND EXPERTISE REQUIRED OF A REVIEWER

These are:

- demonstrated competence in tertiary teaching and learning;
- demonstrated commitment to a student-centred approach to teaching; and
- demonstrated commitment to collaborative, supportive and developmental working relationships.

(See Appendix 2 for more detailed information on the selection criteria and responsibilities of the Course Reviewer.)
Reviewers are notified by EQRC of their selection into the program, and informed of the training program requirements. A certificate is awarded to Reviewers who successfully complete the training program which is usually of 9 - 12 hours duration and conducted over several weeks early in the academic year. Staff who successfully fulfil the role of Course Reviewer provide a vital service to teaching and learning at RMIT and their contribution can be recorded in their teaching portfolio.

Review teams comprise three people, one of whom is designated as the Review Coordinator. The teams are finalised upon completion of the training program, and it is their responsibility to initiate contact, and develop a Review timetable with the course team. Reviewers are assigned through EQRC to review courses outside their own faculties. The Review process does not require that the Reviewers be expert in the field or discipline of a specific course, but rather are able to track and identify the processes of continual course quality improvement. A Course Leader whose course was reviewed in 1995 noted how important an understanding of the focus of the Course Review is:

‘We thought they were going to walk in here and be content driven and wondered how people with their background would know what was appropriate or quality content. But the system is process, not content, orientated.’

Course Review Teams will be required to submit a progress report to EQRC during the course of the Review. The team will receive a form from EQRC for this purpose (see Appendix 3). Reviewers are required to consult with the course team during the Review and work with the Course Leader in completing the final report (see Appendix 4).

3.1.4 ACTING ON COURSE REVIEW REPORTS
At the conclusion of the process Reviewers are required to submit their interim report to EQRC. The Course Leader signs off the report on behalf of the stakeholders. This means that stakeholders will need to be consulted prior to the signing off of the report.
3.2 Sequence of Course Quality Review Activities

October  New Reviewers are nominated by their faculty and continuing Reviewers are identified.
February  Course Quality Reviewers are trained; Review Teams are organised and allocated to courses.
April/May  Course Quality Reviews take place across the whole university.
June  Course Quality Review reports are submitted to EQRC.
July  Interim Course Quality Review reports are considered by EQRC.
August  EQRC finalises recommendations on specific monitoring and final Course Quality Review reports are prepared.
September  EQRC reports to Academic Board and the Board of Technical Studies on the outcomes of the Course Quality Review process, including any trends or areas for further consideration. Approved reports are sent to course teams, relevant Deans and Directors of Teaching Quality for incorporation into the annual evaluation and planning cycle and staff work plans.

3.3 The Course Quality Review Team

3.3.1 PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW

Once the Review Team has been established, the Review Coordinator will obtain copies of the course materials prepared by the course team and call the Review Team together for a preliminary meeting.

The Review Team will be provided with the following documents:

- by the Faculty Director of Teaching Quality:
  – copies of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy and Implementation plans.
  – a brief outline of key practices in educational quality assurance in the Faculty that are relevant to the course to be reviewed.
- by the Course Leader:
  – a succinct written overview of the course which describes their practice since the last Review in terms of their response to the Teaching and Learning Strategy and course team practices.
  – course team annual reports and implementation plans since the last Review.
Careful perusal of this documentation will enable the Review Team to identify the course documents it wishes to access, and develop some preliminary questions to raise with the course team at its first meeting. It is important that the Review Team identify common times in their work agenda when they can carry out their Review activities. Times will then need to be negotiated with the course team.

The following questions may prove a useful guide for the Review Team as they prepare to meet with the course team.

1. Does the evidence indicate that the course team is engaged in a systematic approach to course quality improvement?
2. Has there been consultation with relevant stakeholders?
3. What cycles of improvement have been indicated in the various reports and what further documentation of these cycles needs to be consulted?
4. To what extent have the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities been addressed and over what timeframe?
5. What key documents need to be accessed?
6. Does the evidence describe and explain outcomes? Are the reflective and evaluative processes detailed?
7. Which particular quality improvement cycles will be investigated?

### 3.3.2 PRINCIPLES OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

From its inception, four key principles have been established that underpin quality assurance at RMIT. These are also central to the Course Quality Review process:

• The focus is on continual course quality improvement.
• Accountability is the consequence, not the focus, of the EQA system.
• EQA requires some basis in evidence for claims made.
• Educational quality improvement is concerned with the quality of student learning outcomes.

These principles guide the activities of the Review Team which are as follows:

1. A collaborative approach is taken to the Review, commencing with a meeting between the Review Team and members of the course team. At this meeting the course team will be able to demonstrate their strategic approach and key achievements to the Review Team.
2. The Review Team will review the course team’s quality improvement processes, to see that action for change is based on evidence developed through evaluation, reflection and planning, and that outcomes are clearly articulated and carefully evaluated on a regular basis.
3. The Review Team will examine the course log to determine that the course team has been engaged in activities that have resulted in *improvements* in course content, goals, teaching methods, assessment methods or standards and so on and that these are adequately documented. Members of the course team can provide valuable assistance in accessing the course log.

4. The Review Team will confirm the existence of, and make some judgements about, the *evidence concerning quality improvement processes*.

5. The Review Team will examine the extent to which use has been made of feedback from students, members of the profession, employers and academic peers. It is essential that each Review provide evidence from professionals external to RMIT in support of the relevance and currency of course content.
   - The Review Team will examine the extent to which the course team improvement processes reflect a scholarly approach to practice. This includes the use made of good practice principles and frameworks including those noted in Appendix 12.
   - The Review Team will examine the evidence that has been developed to gauge improvements in student learning outcomes. On the basis of evidence and observation, the Review Team will consider its recommendations on the ways in which the course team may further develop its continual course improvement strategies

8. Finally, the Review Team will draft an interim report based on their investigation and meet with the course team to discuss their findings. It is at this meeting that areas for subsequent action (if appropriate) will be developed. These are areas in which course team attention is required or where improvement opportunities exist. The two teams will negotiate specific actions to address these areas, including a suggested timeframe of achievement. These agreements will form the basis of the specific monitoring section of the Course Quality Review report.

This process is based on the assumption that the Review Team does not need to follow up every activity of a course team. If a number of activities chosen by the Review Team demonstrate a ‘quality’ approach, it is appropriate to assume that this approach is embedded in all course activities.

**3.3.3 THE REVIEW PARTNERSHIP**

In addition to the investigative and reporting role of the Review Team there is also the aspect of *collaborative interaction* with course teams. It is important to maximise the opportunity offered by the review for reflection on, and evaluation of activities. The presence of other academics from different faculties and areas of expertise, who for the time of the Review immerse themselves in the life of the reviewed course, provides an opportunity for learning for all. The Review experience can make a significant contribution to the development of course quality. For example, one Course Leader commented:
Review Teams will welcome the opportunity to meet with members of the course team, representatives of the Course Advisory Committee, practicum supervisors, students, and any stakeholder that the course team feels will assist in seeing the processes for course improvement in action. During the Review of one postgraduate course, the Review Team attended an event that brought together past and present students, field work supervisors and employers. The purpose of this regular event was to enable current students to become acquainted with their professional field, and to keep the course aligned with current trends and practice.

After meeting with relevant bodies and examining the documentary materials, the Review Team will draft their interim report and meet with the course team. This spirit of collaboration will ensure that recommendations are constructive and expressed in terms of achievable outcomes. The interim report will be finalised between the Review Team and the Course Leader, and both will endorse the report before it is forwarded to EQRC.

### 3.3.4 REPORTING ON THE REVIEW

The reporting responsibilities of the Review Team are twofold:

1. To report the results of the Review process to EQRC.
2. To develop recommendations regarding particular aspects of the course team’s process that may require further monitoring, and outlining when this monitoring should occur.

   The report will contain:
   - a summary of the Review Team’s activities;
   - an overview of the course quality improvement process, identifying strengths and making recommendations on any issues that need to be addressed; and
   - recommendations on the monitoring of progress towards remedying the identified concerns.

(See Appendix 4 for additional information on the Review Team report.)
3.4 The Course Team

3.4.1 PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW
The course team can use the following set of questions as a guide when preparing for the Course Quality Review:

• How can we best provide an understanding of our course to the Reviewers?
• What descriptive material is available that will provide a short but comprehensive overview as an introduction to our course?
• Have we made explicit our current improvement cycles and our systematic approach to course quality improvement?
• Do Course Leaders’ annual reports summarise our course quality improvement activities and provide an index to the log?
• How can we help our documentation make sense to an outsider?
• Are the linkages between documents clear and helpful?
• Is the electronic data summary file completely up-to-date?

Course teams are expected to demonstrate their strategic approach and key achievements to the Course Quality Review Team by:

• Providing the Course Quality Review Team with a succinct written overview describing their practice since the last Review in terms of their response to the Teaching and Learning Strategy and course team practices (see Appendix 7 for document guidelines).
• Providing course team annual reports and Teaching and Learning Implementation Plans for the period since the last Review. Annual reports should include references to key course log documents for each initiative reported (see Appendices 8 and 9 for suggested guidelines for annual reports and Teaching and Learning Implementation Plan).

3.4.2 DURING THE REVIEW
Initially the Review Team will contact and meet the Course Leader. It will be helpful if all members of the course team together are available from time to time to talk with the Review Team and to help locate documents illustrating the course quality improvement processes.

3.4.3 HOW LONG DOES THE REVIEW TAKE?
The Reviewers are members of the RMIT teaching community and undertake their Review responsibilities along with their regular commitments. Course teams also have full calendars. One of the greatest difficulties reported by Review Teams is finding common time for consultation and discussion. Review Teams are encouraged to plan their common meeting times, subject of course to negotiations with the course team. The more flexibility and
goodwill that prevails at this time the easier it will be to move quickly through the course Review.

The combination of a well-planned Review, a course that has a systematic and up-to-date course log, and a productive and collaborative working relationship, between and within both the Review and the course team, means that a Review may be accomplished, from preliminary meeting to concluding discussion, in two weeks. The more common experience is a series of visits spanning three to four weeks. However, as the monitoring process becomes established and more courses are reviewed, the time taken by the Review process will be greatly reduced.

3.5 Monitoring Developments

3.5.1 SPECIFIC MONITORING

The EQA System at RMIT has a recent history: the first course audits (Course Reviews) were conducted in 1995. Consequently, most course teams are still developing course logs from scratch and, in many cases, retrospectively. Clear documentation of course cycles of quality improvement are therefore also in the early stages. In this context it is not uncommon for Review Teams to recommend a further course of action for a course team to undertake to improve its evidence collection, documentation, planning, use of stakeholder feedback or evaluative activities.

These specific recommendations of the Review Team become, subject to ratification by EQRC, the subject of the specific monitoring process. The development of these recommendations and their discussion with the course team is intended to be a collaborative and developmental aspect of the Review.

The expression of such recommendations should include:

- specific recommendations for the course team to implement;
- specific improvements that these recommendations are intended to produce; and
- time lines within which these improvements would be expected to be implemented.

When specific monitoring becomes due the Course Leader will prepare a report outlining what the course team has achieved in relation to the areas for specific monitoring and with reference to the recommendations identified in the Course Quality Review report. This report will identify the relevant course log documents that record and provide evidence for the improvement activities (see Appendix 5).
The Course Leader’s report will be reviewed by the Review Coordinator from the original Review Team, who may then consult with the Course Leader or the course team, or take whatever action he or she considers appropriate to determine the adequacy of the course team’s response.

A report (see Appendix 6) will then be forwarded to EQRC by the Review Coordinator. This report will either endorse the course team’s actions as adequate, or report the response as inadequate. In the latter case, EQRC may consult with the full Review Team and/or authorise an immediate full Course Quality Review if desired.

3.5.2 ANNUAL MONITORING

Annual monitoring of course quality improvements will occur at Faculty level. This annual monitoring, based on the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy Plan, will form part of each Faculty’s report to the university-wide annual review of the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The Faculty Director of Teaching Quality will advise EQRC annually that the process has been completed. If any course teams are not responding to the satisfaction of the Faculty, EQRC may decide to schedule an early Review.
APPENDIX 1

Educational Quality Review Committee

1998 Membership

The Chairperson, appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Training)  
Professor Bob Snow

The Director, EPI Group  
Professor John Bowden

Deputy Chair of Academic Board  
Associate Professor Malcolm McCormick

One Dean elected by Academic Board  
Professor Mary Kalantzis

Three academics elected by Academic Board  
Ms Robyn Lines  
Dr Gary Hough  
Ms Marie Sierra

One student member of Academic Board elected by Academic Board  
Ms Jessica Whyte

One member nominated by RMIT Quality Council  
Professor Lindsay Heywood

Observer  
Ms Kate Patrick

Administrator  
Ms Sue Scarlett

Academic Administration  
Mr John Reed  
Mr Simon Williams
APPENDIX 2

Course Quality Reviewer

POSITION DESCRIPTION

1. Position Title: Reviewer
   Educational Quality Assurance system

2. The Educational Quality Assurance system
   At RMIT the EQA system consists of four principles, namely:
   • The focus is on quality improvement.
   • Accountability is the consequence, not the focus, of the EQA system.
   • EQA requires some basis in evidence for claims made.
   • Educational quality improvement is concerned with the quality of student learning.

   The system is managed by the Educational Quality Review Committee, a Standing Committee of Academic Board and, in future, the Board of Technical Studies.

3. Job Summary
   The position (is of two years’ duration) involves participation in a three-person Review Team to conduct Course Quality Reviews at RMIT. A preliminary training program is a requirement of the position. The position involves both educational development and educational evaluation activities.

4. Reporting Relationships
   The Review team reports to the Chairperson, Educational Quality Review Committee.

5. Key Objective
   To implement the University’s Educational Quality Assurance system through participation in a review of the course improvement processes of designated courses.

6. Key Selection Criteria
   • demonstrated excellence in tertiary teaching and learning;
   • demonstrated commitment to a student-centred approach to teaching;
   • demonstrated commitment to collaborative, supportive and developmental working relationships;
   • demonstrated ability to think creatively and strategically to achieve educational outcomes;
   • demonstrated commitment to personal professional development.

7. Specific Accountabilities
   • to participate in a training program for new Reviewers;
   • with other members of a Review Team to review designated RMIT courses and to report on the outcome of the Review to EQRC;
   • support course teams in the process of addressing the RMIT course quality improvement process;
   • contribute to the positive ethos and constructive, collaborative work practices involved in the RMIT quality improvement strategies at RMIT;
   • (as Review Coordinator to be responsible for ongoing monitoring consequent to the Review.)

8. Other Relevant Information
   Currently the term of appointment is for two years with continuation as a Course Quality Reviewer contingent on further approved training. The term of appointment may be extended to 3-5 years as the system becomes established.
APPENDIX 3

The Review Coordinator uses this form to advise EQRC on the progress of the Review. It is also a useful tool for the Review Team to plan their activities and assess progress at any point in time. EQRC will periodically review the Progress Reports, identifying potential issues with a view to improving the Review processes.

EQRC
COURSE QUALITY REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review No:</th>
<th>Course Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Leader:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Coordinator:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Review Team has met to discuss strategy.  
- Contact made with Course Leaders to arrange initial meeting.  
- Copies of relevant documentation received.  
- Review Team has met with Course Leader.  
- Course log reviewed.  
- Review Team has met with course team.  
- Review completed.  
- Interim report discussed with course team.  
  Specific monitoring items agreed.  
- Interim report complete and submitted to EQRC.  
- Revised interim report resubmitted to EQRC (if necessary).

For EQRC use only
- Report accepted by EQRC
- Course team and Review Team notified
- Review result sent to Academic Board by EQRC

Other comments you wish to make:
APPENDIX 4

This is the structure for the Course Quality Review report. It prompts the Reviewers to focus on course quality improvement processes. The Review report is the primary document for identifying issues to be addressed by the course team including those requiring specific monitoring by EQRC.

The Review report is to be discussed by the Course Leader and Review Coordinator to verify statements of fact and to concur with the conclusions reached by the Review Team.

The Course Leader will consult with stakeholders, if appropriate, and sign off the report on behalf of stakeholders.

EQRC

1998 Course Quality Review Report

Report Details: Review Number _____________
Course Name (s) _____________
Course Code (s) _____________
Department _____________
Course Leader _____________
Review Co-ordinator _____________

The Course Quality Review is intended to be a formative process and a part of the course team’s course quality improvement process. Opportunities to demonstrate the strengths of the procedures used and to receive formative feedback are key aims of the Review process. It is also intended that the reports produced may form a collection of exemplars of good practice to allow course teams with less well-developed procedures to benefit from work already done elsewhere in the University.

The Review Team will be expected to review processes and activities in which the course team is engaged. These will relate to both internal (eg course team operation, student feedback, subject reviews) and external (eg course advisory committees, bench marking, employer surveys) aspects of the course team’s operation. In addition the Review Team is to review the course team’s response to the University Course Performance Indicators.

The report should also contain details of any issues that need to be addressed by the course team and a list of outcomes demonstrating that the specific items raised have been addressed effectively. The time frame for achieving these outcomes should be negotiated with the course team. The report should be signed by the Review Coordinator on behalf of the Review Team and by the Course Leader on behalf of the stakeholders. If agreement cannot be reached, the Course Leader can attach the stakeholders’ comments at the end of the report or in a separate document. The time until the next review should be five years.

Review Team membership

A Course Quality Review of the above course was undertaken between _____ and _____ by a Review Team comprising _____ from Department of _______, _____from Department of _______ and _______ from Department of ____________.
APPENDIX 4 (continued)

Review team activities

The Review process included the following activities:

This should include a record of all:

- meetings and discussions the Review Team undertook (with the Course Leader, course team, students, HoD, CAC, etc as appropriate);
- activities of the Review Team regarding the examination of the relationship between the course and the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy, the course leader’s annual reports, electronic document indexing system, course log(s) and other material provided; and
- consultation with the course team regarding the writing of the review report.

1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................

Characteristics of the course

Include a brief description of the course structure and how the course is delivered, approaches to teaching and learning, methods of assessment and course evaluation, meetings with CAC, SSCC, etc, existence of industry links and professional re-accreditation (if any), and any other matters relevant to the Review. The scholarly approach to course improvement including use made of the principles of good practice as well as frameworks for good practice – Appendix 12.

Strengths of the course quality improvement processes

Give an outline of the course quality improvement activities and cycles that are apparent from the course log. This will include the extent to which the Teaching and Learning Strategy Priorities have been addressed. Highlight the strengths of the processes and activities evidenced in the course log. A brief description of practices and processes, which might be used as exemplars of best practice, should also be given.

1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................

Issues to be addressed

This section should list issues that need to be addressed by the course team. This may include: lack of documentation in the course log and/or the electronic document indexing system, CQI cycles which could have been completed but were not, limited coverage of the Teaching and Learning Priorities, no action following poor performance as revealed by the Course Performance Indicator and/or weakness in reference to good practice frameworks and scholarly practice more generally. All advice / agreed activities should be of a developmental nature and reflect the philosophy and principles of the EQA system.

1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................

Specific outcomes required

The Review Team believes that specific monitoring is not required for the issues listed above. It is expected that these issues will be addressed by the course team and that the benefits will be seen at the time of the next Review.

OR

The Review Team and the course team in consultation have determined that the following outcomes are desirable and achievable in the period leading to the next specific monitoring in ________.
APPENDIX 4 (continued)

The outcomes listed should be linked to the issues raised and will form the basis of the next specific monitoring. Examples may include: completion of certain surveys, documents showing that a given action has been taken, minutes of meetings to be held, evidence that a given performance goal has been achieved.

1. …………………………………………………………………
2. ………………………………………………………………

Endorsed by Course Leader: ___________________________ Date: _____________
On behalf of stakeholders

Review Team Coordinator: ___________________________ Date: _____________
On behalf of Review Team

Comments by Course Leader on behalf of stakeholders:
APPENDIX 5

This report proforma is sent to the Course Leader at the time noted in the Review report. It is to be completed by the Course Leader to document actions taken in response to the specific monitoring items described in the Review report. The Course Leader’s report is returned to EQRC demonstrating that effective action has been taken by the course team.

EQRC

SPECIFIC MONITORING – COURSE LEADER’S REPORT

Course:

Department:

Course Leader:

Telephone: Fax: Email:

Year of original Review: Review no:

Specific items to be monitored in, as taken from the Review report

The issues raised and the outcomes sought will be taken from the EQRC database and printed here.

Use the following headings to address each of the items specified above. Copies of course leader’s annual reports produced since the last Review should also be attached.

1. Summary of Actions Taken.

2. Evaluation of Impact of Actions

   Include any procedures used to evaluate actions taken, if appropriate.

3. Documents and/or Summaries Produced

   Include references to course log entries and electronic summaries if available. Titles and/or summaries will usually be sufficient for the Reviewer to monitor the items specified, but in some cases full documents will be needed. Reviewers will contact you if they wish to see documents not supplied.

4. Planned Future Actions in Relation to Items Monitored

Not all items to be monitored will require entries under each heading.

Signature of Course Leader Date:

Endorsement of Head of Department Date:
APPENDIX 6

The Review Coordinator considers the course team’s actions on the issues raised for specific monitoring. The Review Coordinator refers to the Course Leader’s report (Appendix 5) and may choose to clarify course team activities with the Course Leader. The Review Coordinator advises EQRC as to whether the actions have been appropriate.

EQRC

SPECIFIC MONITORING – REVIEWER’S REPORT

Course:

Department:

Reviewer:

Telephone: Fax: Email:

Year of original Review: Review no:

Action taken during monitoring:
Please determine what action to take after reading the Course Leader’s monitoring report and annual reports

- Needed only to read Course Leader’s reports
- Viewed electronic index and/or course log
- Telephoned/met with Course Leader
- Sought further documentation from Course Leader
- Other (please specify)

Result of monitoring:

- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

Please provide recommendations to EQRC in light of an unsatisfactory result, including suggested timelines for proposed actions (eg re-monitor next year, Review next year).

Suggestions to improve format of Course Leader’s monitoring report:
Please make suggestions for improvement in the Course Leader’s monitoring report so that EQRC can make the monitoring activity as efficient as possible.

Signature of Reviewer Date:

(Please complete after consideration of the Course Leader's report and return to EQRC at 13.D.24.)
APPENDIX 7

The report describes the course team’s strategic approach and key achievements as a briefing paper for the Review Team. The course team describes the course in its context and its improvement processes, including its strategy for action in the next period.

COURSE TEAM PRACTICES REPORT

Guidelines for Course Teams

You should use the following headings. The report will be about three pages long and can reference other documents.

Course and Context
Provide an overview for the reviewers of the course and any particular issues relating to it.

Describe the course – eg undergraduate or postgraduate, structure, length, honours, streams, majors, work experience, prerequisites, any special characteristics.

Describe the students – eg mix of school leavers and mature age students, percentage of overseas and exchange students, changes in characteristics of students over time, participation by disadvantaged groups.

Describe the context – eg changes in the profession the course services, changes in employment opportunities, amalgamations of courses, changes to staffing, introduction of off-shore courses.

Course Quality Improvement Approach
Provide an overview of how the course team has been approaching course improvement. Have there been key areas of endeavour since the last Review?
What is the team’s approach to addressing all the aspects of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy? What are the most significant quality improvement cycles since the last Review?

Course Team Management
Describe how the course team is organised and how evaluation and review of the course is built into course team operation. How is the course team defined? How is the course managed? Are there coordinators of subject areas, years etc? How does the team communicate? What is the process for Review? Who has responsibility for keeping the course log? How is the course log structured to facilitate improvement processes and full course team involvement?

Strategy for the Next Period
Outline your thinking about the focus of the course team for the next period. Are there areas of the Teaching and Learning Strategy which will become a focus and are there ideas about how the team might proceed? Are there incomplete cycles that you expect to complete? Are there particular educational or management challenges that you will need to address?
APPENDIX 8

The annual report plays a key role in the Faculty and in the EQA system documenting achievements implementing the Teaching and Learning Strategy as well as describing plans for the year to come.

COURSE LEADER’S ANNUAL REPORT

Guidelines for Course Teams

Course:

Faculty:

Course Leader:

Date:

Introduction
Present a brief overview of the course team’s key approaches to the improvement of teaching and learning for the year. This should include an outline of the course quality improvement cycles underway and should reveal how these initiatives support the implementation of the University and Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategies.

Achievements
Detail what has been achieved during the year in relation to the strategy outlined above and the Teaching and Learning Strategy implementation plan for the course for the year. This could be set out by key course team initiatives and be related to the Teaching and Learning Strategy (which will also have been referenced in your Teaching and Learning implementation plan). A suggested matrix is attached, but you should contact your Faculty Director of Teaching Quality to discuss specific Faculty practices.

Note achievements which are additional to the planned activities and note targets which were not met, and comment on the reasons for this.

Key Evaluation Findings
Outline changes which will influence the work to be undertaken in the next year. This may include changes to the context in which the team is working and findings from the evaluation of initiatives implemented during the year.

Identify new opportunities which have emerged and problem areas which have been identified as requiring attention.

Directions for the Following Year

Outline directions for the following year based on the overall strategy of the course team in relation to the Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy and evaluation data.

Add the Course Leader annual report matrix (refer overleaf).
APPENDIX 8 (continued)

This is part of the Course Leader’s Annual Report (refer to previous page)

COURSE LEADER’S ANNUAL REPORT MATRIX

Faculty:
Course:
Year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course team initiative</th>
<th>Course activities to develop the initiative</th>
<th>Link to previous activities</th>
<th>Aspects of the Faculty T&amp;L Strategy addressed by the initiative</th>
<th>Target / indicator</th>
<th>Progress /comment /evaluation</th>
<th>Codes of documents in the course log</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 9

This is a matrix which has been used by some course teams for recording their decisions about what they intend doing in the coming year. It helps them to address key aspects of the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Guidelines for Course Teams

Faculty:

Course:

Year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course team initiative</th>
<th>Course activities to develop initiative</th>
<th>Aspects of the Faculty T&amp;L Strategy addressed by the initiative</th>
<th>Target / indicator</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 10

(for full Strategy refer to the web site: www.teaching.rmit.edu.au)

RMIT TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY:
PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES

RMIT's system of tertiary education is characterised by:
• continuity (a matrix from Access and certificate level programs to PhD and beyond)
• entry and exit possible at each level
• internationalisation in all forms-curriculum, people, locations
• flexibility in courseware and learning experiences, and
• multi-directional pathways

All RMIT courses will demonstrate
• an appropriate balance in meeting stakeholders' needs.
• quality assurance and continual quality improvement principles and practices in teaching and learning, assessment and course management.

RMIT has a commitment to
• valuing its staff and their contributions to effective teaching and learning and recognising and rewarding those activities as an important fact career development.
• a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. The ultimate test of the effectiveness of teaching is whether it has helped students to learn. Effective student learning is linked to the graduate attributes considered to be desirable by course or subject designers.
• maximising student choice of course structure and learning experiences - within the constraints of course purposes, program integrity and available resources.
• maximising opportunities for participation for those groups traditionally disadvantaged in their access to tertiary education.
• Students’ educational experiences will be a preparation for a working life. Students will develop theoretical understanding as well as skills and techniques relevant to an occupational field and their learning experiences will facilitate the development of relevant generic, interpersonal and career-management skills.
• RMIT graduates will be knowledgeable, creative, critical, responsible and employable (in a broad sense), as well as being life long learners and potential leaders.
• Assessment outcomes at RMIT will have a validity, ie they will be true indicators of what they support to be assessing. They will be consistent with the graduates attributes pertaining to subject or courses and the objectives of theose subjects or courses.

RMIT expects teaching staff at all levels, to act as facilitators of the learning process and to:
• listen to students and learn from them,
• have a commitment and desire to share their field of expertise and its relevance to professional practice;
• use a variety of teaching strategies, carefully chosen to facilitate intended learning outcomes;
• examine, evaluate and select emerging technologies in order to improve student learning;
• enhance those educational technologies where possible;
• seek to increase student access to new technologies where this will assist learning;
• set realistic targets or objectives when introducing new technology into teaching
• actively involve students in learning through methods such as case studies, discussion, group projects and problem solving;
• continually improve professional practice through reflection, discussion and innovation
Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning at RMIT
APPENDIX 12

A Good Practice Framework for RMIT online learning environments

Introduction
The framework can be used as a

- Planning tool for the development and support of online learning environments
- Review tool to identify improvement opportunities as part of the course and department improvement processes

The framework was developed by RMIT and a team of experts as part of a national project. The framework was then contextualised and condensed by RMIT for use by course teams. It has been adopted by the Teaching and Learning Strategy Committee as guidelines for course management and support teams under the RMIT EQA system.

In particular Course Teams are expected to engage in developing and supporting online learning environments in a manner consistent with these guidelines. In addition, Review Teams will refer to these guidelines as part of their constructive comment on course team improvement processes.

A full version of the framework can be accessed through the DEETYA site at http://www.deetya.gov.au/nbeet/publicat/rbl/contents.htm or by email quality@rmit.edu.au. This full version is provided to clarify and extend the RMIT framework.

Good practice in delivering online learning exists when course teams focus not just on the finished product, but also attend to improving online activities leading to quality outcomes. These activities form the basis of the framework.

Fig 1 The Good Practice Framework

The Framework is a nested framework and identifies:

10 essential principles to consider when implementing good practice.

Each principle lists 4-5 indicators which identify when good practice has been achieved

Strategies to achieve good practice are developed by each team

Checklists can be developed by course teams as supplementary documentation for course logs

Course teams can use these indicators to identify and prioritise any necessary improvement activities (Refer to fig 2) for their online delivery courses.

The ten principles which have been identified as essential in the development of good practice are;
1. Informed planning and management of resources
2. Sustained committed leadership
3. Improving access for all clients, incorporates equity and promotes cultural diversity
4. Understanding the requirements of the learner and reflects stakeholder requirements
5. The design, development and implementation of programs for effective and active learning
6. Creating confident and committed staff with new competencies
7. Managing and maintaining the technical infrastructure
8. Evaluating for continuous improvement
9. The provision of effective and efficient administrative systems and services
10. Supporting the needs of learners

Using the Framework - Course Teams and Review Teams

The framework can be used by course teams to analyse and improve their online delivery and by review teams when reviewing online learning improvements.

Fig 2

A Good Practice Framework for RMIT online learning environments
Principle 1. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves informed planning and management of resources

Policies and mission statements adopted by online projects must include reference to RMIT teaching and learning strategies. Online delivery at RMIT ensures that trained people, infrastructure, and facilities are available and adequate for each project.

Indicators Of Good Practice
1. Planning for online delivery is integrated with all planning activities within faculty/department, including, financial, human resource and support service
2. An improvement plan identifying responsibilities, performance indicators and processes has been developed and is monitored to evaluate online programs
3. A realistic costing of all aspects of online delivery has been made including equitable allocation of all departmental resources
4. Online policies and processes have been incorporated into the RMIT Quality
5. Projects are regularly reviewed and opportunities identified are acted upon

Principle 2. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves sustained committed leadership

Leadership style and behaviour is critical in ensuring that the university’s goals for RMIT online delivery are achieved. Institutional support for the development and use of online activities are a critical prerequisite for widespread adoption and integration into mainstream programs.

Indicators Of Good Practice
1. Staff in leadership roles demonstrate commitment to the provision and maintenance of online activities and ongoing improvement processes
2. Strategies have been implemented to provide a level of complex technical and online support required to run efficient, reliable and ‘user friendly’ systems
3. Collaborative arrangements with other faculties and departments and/or with other educational institutions and/or with industry have been explored to ensure effective access to and use of resources
4. The impact of online projects and its outcomes on existing managerial, administrative and physical facilities has been assessed

Principle 3. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves improving access for all clients, incorporates equity and promotes cultural diversity

The provision of online projects improves the access, participation and success rates of under-represented groups. Learning opportunities ensure that learners are not limited in their engagement due to physical location, disability, race, ethnicity, level of technological skills or level of access to physical resources and that their level of language and literacy skills are taken into account. Appropriate access to the outcomes of RMIT online delivery is available to all students irrespective of income and location.

online delivery actively encourages the diversity of student groups.
**Indicators Of Good Practice**

1. Barriers that prevent current and potential students accessing online delivery products and services are identified and strategies to improve access and participation are implemented.

2. Existing data from the Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Services and Equity’s office is used to identify and develop specific strategies for targeted equity groups.

3. Courseware development for RMIT online delivery accommodates the background skills and interests of equity groups.

4. Delivery media are selected on the basis of ‘best fit’ between learner effectiveness, accessibility and cost.

5. Programs avoid prohibitive attendance requirements, unnecessary control the pace of learning, or restriction of entry and exit options.

---

**Principle 4. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves understanding the requirements of the learner and reflects stakeholder requirements**

The main focus of online developments is the needs of learners, clients and stakeholders. Online delivery has a student centred approach that is soundly based in an understanding of learners’ characteristics and needs. Stakeholder requirements are reflected in the provision of online projects.

**Indicators of Good Practice**

1. External and internal clients and stakeholders have been identified (eg government agencies, community groups etc) and their needs and expectations are reflected in online delivery processes.

2. Online delivery policies and practices make clear the university’s obligations to its learners and the learner’s obligation to the institution.

3. An appropriate range of resources is available to accommodate student learning.

4. A process for assessing customer requirements and satisfaction is developed and implemented.

---

**Principle 5. Good practice in RMIT online delivery involves the design, development and implementation of programs for effective and active learning**

Course design, development and implementation processes are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that courses meet the requirements of learners, industry and the professions and are effective in achieving learning outcomes.

**Indicators of Good Practice**

**Course Design, Development and Assessment**

1. Course design incorporates interactive instruction techniques mediated by human intervention and a supportive learning environment.

2. Program and course objectives clearly specify the subject matter to be covered,
the intellectual skills to be acquired and the learning methods used

3. Course design processes reflect desired graduate attributes, promotes active learning, and recognises varied starting points in levels of confidence, learning styles and motivation

4. Criteria for evaluating student performance are clearly established, stated in course guidelines and are generally understood by students and staff

5. Online project outcomes are regularly benchmarked against learning outcomes in mainstream courses to ensure consistency

---

**Principle 6. Good practice in RMIT online delivery involves creating confident and committed staff with new competencies**

Recruitment and management processes at RMIT provides development opportunities for all staff to ensure that they have the skills to meet client focused and equitable outcomes.

**Indicators of Good Practice**

1. Formal or informal professional development for online delivery activities (inc subject, technical and instructional design expertise) are identified and systematically implemented

2. Changes to staff roles and work practices as a result of changes to teaching and learning are recognised, processes are in place to inform HRMG and to address potential industrial relations issues

3. Good practice of RMIT online delivery is both rewarded and effectively disseminated to all staff across the university

4. Procedures and incentives are in place to encourage staff to make appropriate and innovative use of electronic information resources to improve the academic program, publish scholarly information, and to encourage equitable student use.

5. Where relevant, staff workplans incorporate staff’s professional development needs for the development, delivery and support of online course delivery

---

**Principle 7. Good practice in RMIT online delivery involves managing and maintaining the technical infrastructure**

Decisions about the choice of technology are driven by consideration of learners’ needs, the ability of teachers and other staff to provide support for learners, and the curriculum content of the program. Resource materials are of sound quality, suitable for the purpose, and well matched with technologies and with staffing requirements.

**Indicators of Good Practice**

1. The choice of technology, including the delivery method, reflects learners needs, the curriculum content of the program and human resource availability

2. The technology is supported by a faculty technology plan that includes
   - How the technology is to be used for learning
   - How people are to be trained to use the technology
   - How the technology is to be managed and maintained
3. Information technology standards are in place and members of online projects are aware of these so that they can make an informed choice when making technology purchases

4. Decisions have been made whether any technology is required for the program, and the preferred technology or mix of technologies to satisfy requirements has been identified and prioritised

5. Decisions have been made whether to buy in or adapt existing learning materials or to develop new materials

---

**Principle 8. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves evaluating for continuous improvement**

*Online delivery evaluates and continuously improves its provision of Flexible delivery. RMIT online initiatives are continuously informed by the evaluation of learning outcomes, equity considerations, cost effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction.*

**Indicators of Good Practice**

1. Qualitative and quantitative performance indicators have been identified e.g.
   - Increased participation, faster student completion
   - Higher student retention, higher enrolments/re-enrolments,
   - Improved graduate attributes,
   - Improved access for workers and disadvantaged groups

2. Online delivery processes and outcomes are regularly benchmarked against other departments or institutions
   
   Online delivery provides for formal investigations and specific actions to deal with student complaints (see student complaint policy)

---

**Principle 9. Good practice for RMIT online delivery involves the provision of effective and efficient administrative systems and services**

*The institution provides administrative systems and services that support and complement the provision of online delivery.*

**Indicators of Good Practice**

1. Management information systems are flexible and take into account all aspects of RMIT online delivery including student enrolment, production scheduling, delivery processes, planning and costing mechanisms and meet the demands of RMIT online delivery in terms of timeframes, reliability and accessibility

2. Administrative processes facilitate learner progress while allowing maximum flexibility in program choice

3. There is ready electronic access to information resources such as bulletin boards, etc. with sufficient capacity to supply high-volume data where appropriate

4. Copyright and intellectual property implications of buying, licensing or developing materials have been explored and processes are in place conforming with university policy
Principle 10. Good practice in RMIT online delivery involves supporting the needs of learners

The needs for student learning, technical and personal support for online delivery are identified, provided and regularly reviewed. Decisions on the comprehensiveness of services depend on the purposes of online delivery and the diversity of its student body.

Indicators of Good practice

1. Online delivery systematically studies the characteristics of its student cohort and identifies the support needs of the student population

2. Online delivery has an organised system for admission, assessment, orientation, support and student follow-up compatible with the circumstances of students

3. Support services are provided to enable all students to participate effectively and to enhance their success in achieving their educational outcomes

4. Educational programs address differing skill levels of users, and strategies are implemented to provide online help and support

5. A decision has been made about the extent to which equipment will be provided to learners (e.g. on loan, or by access in a library), and the extent to which equipment must be provided for staff use

6. Precise, accurate and current information is readily available and well publicised to students concerning: (a) educational outcomes (b) degrees, curricular offerings; (c) the total costs of online delivery modules, other financial obligations; student financial aid and fee refund policies; (d) requirements for admission and for achievement of degrees; (e) assessment processes; and, (f) rules defining inappropriate student conduct and the redress of grievances
Suggested Further Reading


Additional Relevant RMIT Documents
The following documents are available by contacting your Faculty Director of Teaching Quality.

*RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy*, including Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategies.

*A Quality System for RMIT: The way we work at RMIT* 1996


*Performance of RMIT Courses* 1997

*Profile Development and Course Performance Indicators (Higher Education and VET)* 1997
**Evaluation and Suggestions**

Has this handbook been useful to you as an introduction to the EQA system at RMIT?

How? ........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Has this handbook been useful to you as a member of a course team?

How? ........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Has this handbook been useful to you in conducting a Course Quality Review?

How? ........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Are there other material, areas and issues that you would like to see covered in future?

Please list................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Do you have any other suggestions for improving this handbook?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Please return or fax this page with your suggestions and comments to:

EPI Group  
RMIT, City Campus  
Fax  9925 4520  
Phone 9925 3733