####

School Reviews

Guidelines for schools

Planning and Service Performance

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**Introduction**

These guidelines are provided to assist Schools in the preparation for the School review and the site visit, and to outline the responsibilities of internal and external stakeholders;

A range of documents and templates to support Schools through the review process are provided by Planning and Service Performance.

**Characteristics of School Reviews**

School reviews recommenced at the ANU in 2016, and play an important part in fostering quality management and continuous improvement.

Each of the University’s Schools are reviewed once every five years. Although the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or College Dean may trigger a shorter review cycle on the basis of evidence relating to the emergence of new research or education directions, viability, failure to meet the university or external standards or policies within research, education or service outcomes or the student experience.

Where relevant, reviews will be scheduled to coincide with external accreditation timelines. Centres and Institutes can be reviewed separately or as part of the review of a School. More than one School in a cognate area can be reviewed simultaneously.

A review of a School will:

* critically evaluate the current performance of the School, including an assessment of performance over time across all areas of activity (research and innovation, learning and teaching, outreach and engagement, leadership, governance, resources and administration);
* assess the extent to which School’s activities support the objectives of the College Business Plan, the ANU Strategic Plan and related Executive Plans;
* consider the efficiency and effectiveness of allocated resource utilisation;
* identify recommendations to improve performance; and
* provide advice on the future strategic direction of the School, including research priorities, program and course direction, staffing profile, noting developments within the School and University, relevant academic disciplines, and wider industries / professions and the community.

**Timings and duration of reviews**

Planning and Service Performance prepare a tentative schedule for reviews to be held over the forthcoming year, in consultation with the VC, DVC sponsor, College Dean and School Directors.

The School Director prepares a list of proposed review panel members for approval by the VC, DVC and College Dean. The School Director liaises with potential panel members to ascertain their availability.

When dates and panel members are finalised, PSP prepares formal invitations, including the Confidentiality agreement and Conflict of Interest form, and these invitations are sent by the DVC office.

The normal duration of a review will be three days. In some cases, a shorter review may be appropriate. This should be decided on a case-by-case basis, and in consultation with the College Dean, and the DVC.

**Composition of the panel**

School reviews are undertaken by a panel of no fewer than four members, and must include at least three independent, external reviewers.

The review panel will be chaired by one of the independent, external reviewers.

Panel members must have national and international recognised discipline expertise and knowledge, drawn from a range of institutions, including international partners or benchmark universities or institutes. Where it is relevant to the core functions of the School, one of the external members may have strong industry, corporate or government links.

Every effort should be made to achieve an even gender balance.

The College Dean endorses and the DVC sponsor approves the constitution of the review panel.

Panel members must sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the University’s commercial intellectual property, and declare any conflict of interest.

**Review costs**

Costs associated with the review, including travel and accommodation (If applicable) and any other associated costs of the review panel, will be borne by the School.

Refer to the ANU Procedure: Travel – class of air travel, when arranging international travel for panel members.

<https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_000676>

**Terms of Reference**

Each review is carried out according to the standard terms of reference. The VC and DVC sponsor may propose additional terms of reference for the element under review, depending on the strategic objectives of the review and the strengths and weaknesses of the School being reviewed.

The terms of reference for School reviews is aligned to the University's strategic planning framework and its future vision and priorities in response to national and international contexts.

The VC, DVC sponsor, College Dean and School Director meet to consider the proposed terms of reference.

**Self-Evaluation Report**

The Self-Evaluation Report will typically be no longer than 20-25 A4 pages, excluding appendices, and must address the terms of reference for the review.

The Self-Evaluation Report is an evidence based document assessing to which extent the School’s activities address the terms of reference and support the strategic priorities of the College Plan, and the ANU Strategic Plan and related Executive Plans

Schools are provided with review documentation, including performance data and templates at least 9 months in advance of the site visit.

The Self-Evaluation Report allows the School to reflect upon and analyse operations in order to optimise future performance. Consequently, the focus of the submission is to identify future directions and strategic intentions for the School. However, to set the context for the review, it is important to include the School’s history and its present circumstances with a focus on factors which may have contributed to the current operating environment and potential outlook of the School.

The Self-Evaluation report is submitted to the DVC sponsor at least two months before the site visit. PSP arranges for the panel members to receive a copy of the Self-Evaluation Report, and any other associated documentation four (4) weeks prior to the site visit.

**Call for written submissions**

The College Dean issues a University-wide call for written submissions four (4) weeks prior to the site visit. This call for submissions includes staff, students and external stakeholders:

* ANU Executive anu.executive@anu.edu.au
* ANU College Deans college.deans@anu.au
* ANU College General Managers college.gms@anu.edu.au
* ANU Academic Directors academic.directors@anu.edu.au
* ANU Admin Unit Directors admin.units@anu.edu.au
* ANU Service Division Directors service.director@anu.edu.au
* School staff
* Schools students (undergraduate, honours, postgraduate, HDR etc.)
* External professional and accrediting bodies

All written submissions to the review panel are confidential (unless the author states otherwise) and is sent to the panel members one week before the site visit. Submission may also be submitted anonymously.

Submissions are managed in accordance with the University’s Privacy Policy. The University Privacy Policy covers the handling practices of the University - for the collection, use, disclosure storage and security of personal and sensitive information.

**Site visit schedule**

The School prepares the site visit schedule with support from PSP. The site visit schedule is submitted to the DVC sponsor at last two months before the site visit for approval.

The site visit schedule must provide the opportunity for all sections of the School, including academic and professional staff, research, postgraduate and undergraduate students, to meet the panel.

The VC, DVC sponsor and College Dean meet the panel members on the morning of Day 1 of the site visit to welcome the panel and to provide a strategic overview of the University and the School under review.

The VC, DVC sponsor, College Dean and School Director attend the final session on Day 3 to consider the panel’s preliminary findings.

The site visit schedule may include visits to the School facilities if this provides the opportunity to clarify or illustrate points.

The site visit schedule should allow sufficient free time for the panel have internal de-briefing sessions or if required, to follow up discussion with those already interviewed.

Interviews with representatives of professional and other external bodies may be arranged. There may be opportunities for informal discussions with other groups as part of the stakeholder dinner on Day 1 of the site visit.

The School is responsible for coordinating all relevant travel arrangements, appointments, room bookings, catering and associated logistics.

**Stakeholder dinners**

An informal welcome dinner for panel members may be held on the evening before the start of the site visit, subject to panel members’ arrival times. This dinner is hosted by the School Director.

A formal stakeholder dinner is held on the first evening of the site visit. This dinner may include representatives from industry, government, professional bodies, and employer groups, as well as alumni or emeritus professors who can provide relevant context on the School’s research, teaching, and engagement activities.

**Review panel report**

The purpose of the panel report is to provide an objective view of the School’s assessment of its activities as outlined in the Self-Evaluation report and to either commend or recommend changes to those plans.

Commendations are made in areas where the School has achieved outstanding outcomes, or made significant progress towards doing so.

Recommendations are made in areas where improvements can be made. When making recommendations, the panel will take into account the University’s strategic objectives, as outlined in the ANU Strategic Plan and associated Executive Plans. Recommendations should be detailed and constructive.

Recommendations will be directed towards the School making clear and constructive suggestions on how the School should proceed.

The review process will be conducted in the spirit of modern quality management approaches:

* It involves a no blame environment;
* It reviews the School’s performance collectively rather than that of individuals;
* It is supportive of staff, students and other stakeholders involved in the review process;
* It is performed in the interest of continuous improvement for the School as a whole;
* It identifies constructive solutions to issues;
* It is geared towards a celebration of achievements.

The panel report is an academic peer review and prepared by the panel members. A template is provided by PSP. The Chair may ask panel members to draft individual sections of the report if appropriate. The panel report must be completed within four weeks of the site visit and sent to the School Director who confirms the factual accuracy of the report before the DVC sponsor approves.

**Post-review process**

The School is provided with a School Response template.

The School prepares a response against the recommendations set out in the panel report within six weeks of the report being endorsed by the University Executive. The response also includes an implementation plan which will include actions, timeframes and persons responsible against each of the recommendations.

The School Response is endorsed by the College Dean and sent to the DVC sponsor for endorsement.

There may be a meeting between the College Dean and University Executive to discuss the response and implementation plan.

The VC and DVC sponsor hosts a School Forum 3 months after the school response has been approved to share the report findings and implementation plan with the School community.

**12-month progress update**

A progress report against the recommendations will be provided by the School to the DVC sponsor.