ACADEMIC QUALITY RESPONSE GUIDELINES

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Policy Document Approver	Academic Quality Committee
Responsible Body/Person	Academic Quality Committee
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Related HE Standards	5.3.3, 5.3.4a, 5.3.5, 5.3.7 , 5.4, 6.3.2 d,e,f,g h.
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	N/A

1. **PURPOSE**

   To guide affiliated colleges in making responses to academic quality issues identified by an ACT board or committee, or ACT Office to enable the capacity for the benchmark review of teaching, supervision, and student progression, attrition, and completion rates - for future course review and current risk mitigation.

2. **DEFINITIONS**

   Academic Board is the Academic Board of the **ACT**.

   Academic Quality Committee (AQC) is the committee of the ACT which oversees the quality assurance of academic coursework activities across the ACT.

   Academic Quality Officer is the officer of the **ACT** who promotes academic quality in the ACT through the use of academic data, through their role as **Executive Officer (EO)** on the **Academic Quality Committee (AQC)**, and by supporting the development of ACT's quality management system.

   ACT is the Australian College of Theology Limited.

   ACT Office is the office of the Australian College of Theology Limited.

   Affiliated College is an institution approved to offer an accredited higher education award of the **ACT**.

   Assessment is the evaluation and measurement of student performance.

   Course of Study is a course of **units** that lead to an **award** given by the **ACT**.

   EO see **Executive Officer**.

   Executive Officer (EO) is the officer of the ACT with responsibility for the administration of a board or committee of the ACT.

   Full Time load is calculated as 48 credit points per semester. 75% of a full-time load qualifies students to be deemed as maintaining a full-time load, being 36 credit points per semester. For further definition, see the *Unit Enrolment and Results Policy*.

Moderation is a process that ensures quality and consistency in assessment across **affiliated colleges**. The process follows the *Moderation Policy* and *Moderation Procedure*.

Off-campus delivery mode is a way of delivering a unit which does not require students to be physically present on campus. It is also known as distance, online, or external study.

Part Time is any study load under a **Full Time** load.

QILT stands for *Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching*, a suite of surveys administered by the **SRC**.

Senior executive is an officer at the highest levels of the **ACT** who has responsibility for managing the day-to-day operations of the **ACT** and who is authorised to make operating decisions based on the **Schedule of Delegations**. The **CEO** and **Associate Dean** are senior executives in the **ACT**.

SRC is the Social Research Centre.

Tickit is the risk management software program used by the ACT, a proprietary software produced by Tickit Systems Pty Ltd.

Unit of Study Evaluation Survey (USES) is a survey undertaken on a set schedule which evaluates certain **units** of the ACT.

3. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all the officers and Affiliated Colleges of the Australian College of Theology (ACT)

4. PRINCIPLES

Types of academic quality issues

4.1. An academic quality issue may be identified by ACT Office staff, Board, or Committee. The identification of issues normally arises through quality assurance processes described in the *Quality Management Policy*. An academic quality issue may be one of the following types:

- Required response to an identified issue in student feedback and/or Academic data including but not limited to –
  - o Student Experience Survey (QILT),
  - o Graduate Outcome Survey (QILT),
  - o Employer Satisfaction Survey (QILT),
  - o Unit of Study Evaluation Survey (USES),
  - o Attrition Rates Data,
  - o Moderation Reports,

- o Grade Array,

- o Progression Data Undergraduate, and

- o Progression Data Postgraduate

- An issue flagged in the moderation process, including but not limited to:

    - o Number of moderation issues raised,

    - o Feedback to students,

    - o Marking accuracy/quality,

    - o Application of penalties,

    - o Administration errors,

    - o Assessment design,

    - o Plagiarism, and

    - o Required response to moderation reports

- Required response to a relevant (of an academic nature) student complaints, grievance, or critical incident reports

- Required response to staff or student academic misconduct

- Required response to relevant (of an academic nature) ACT risk management software (Tickit) task compliance reporting completion

- Required response to completion of other reporting required of Affiliated Colleges

General process for responding to identified issues - See Quality Management Policy 6.1.13-6.1.14

4.2. The Affiliated College response will generally be made using the *Academic Data Response Form* in Tickit. In making the response, the college will have the opportunity to comment on the identified issue and to provide their own evaluation of the issue. The college will describe the management response of the college, both those elements implemented and those planned. The college response will be assessed and either accepted as an appropriate response or not accepted, in which case further detail may be sought from the college or the issue may be referred to a senior executive of the ACT, Academic Board, or Board of Directors.

4.3. ACT management, boards, or committees may request a detailed action plan from a college where it is warranted by the nature of an academic quality issue. If there is evidence of a persisting issue, the college may be requested to further report on the implementation, evaluation, and development of the action plan. See 6.1.12 of the Quality Management Policy.

Responses to issues related to a faculty or staff member

4.4. Where an identified issue primarily relates to the performance of a faculty or staff member, a college may follow this pattern of response:

- In the first instance, the direct supervisor may discuss the issue with the person and together plan appropriate strategies to address the issue.

- If the same or a similar issue is identified for a person on a second occasion, then in addition to the above the college may apply an increased level of oversight by the supervisor. If the issue relates to moderation then the level of oversight described in the *Moderation Policy* under the section *Induction and Mentoring of Staff* may be applied. Otherwise, a college may utilise strategies listed in the *Faculty Qualification Policy* for the guidance and oversight of staff.

- If the same or a similar issue is identified for a person on a third occasion, the direct supervisor, in discussion with senior management of the college, may develop a professional development plan targeting the identified issue. The college would monitor the effectiveness of the planned activities in addressing the issue and take appropriate action based on the outcomes, together with being reviewed by ACT management, Board, or Committee.

Responding to issues related to a cohort of students

4.5. Where an identified issue primarily relates to a cohort of students (e.g., students studying in off-campus mode, part time students, students studying in a language other than English), a college may take the following steps in response to the issue:

- Firstly, investigate the nature of the issue including its scope, severity, and any contributing factors and causes. Colleges may use a combination of quantitative and qualitative academic data as well as information gained from discussions with key personnel and stakeholders. Where possible, benchmarked data should inform the assessment of the issue. In some cases, it may be necessary for the college to gather new information to properly assess the issue, e.g., introduce a new survey.

- Once the nature of the issue has been determined, the college would develop targeted response strategies constituting the action plan. The action plan should state strategies, assign responsibilities and time frames, and identify performance measures to assess the success of the plan. Strategies may be of one or more of the following categories:

  o Policy development,

  o Staff professional development,

  o Refined or new administrative processes,

- o   Provision of student support services,

- o   Changed academic governance processes or structure,

- o   Provision of additional learning resources, and

- o   Changes to the learning environment, including use of technology

- Once implemented, the effectiveness of the action plan would be assessed by the college and further developed based on outcomes and any contextual changes, together with being reviewed by ACT management, Board, or Committee.

Responding to issues broadly related to students at a college

4.6. Where an identified issue broadly relates to the students of a college, the responses outlined under 4.5 may be applied.

Responding to issues related to the delivery of a particular course

4.7. Where an identified issue primarily relates to a particular course offered at a college, the following steps may be taken:

- As in 4.5 above, the first step is to investigate the issue to determine its nature.

- As in 4.5 above, an action plan is developed once the nature of the issue has been determined. The categories of response strategies listed above may still apply, though the college should give particular attention to the following:

  - o   The course entry requirements and their application,

  - o   The appropriateness of faculty delivering the course,

  - o   The course structure in relation to the student cohorts enrolled in the course at the college, and

  - o   The course outcomes, such as employment outcomes, in relation to the student cohort enrolled in the course at the college.

- Once implemented, the effectiveness of the action plan would be assessed by the college and further developed based on outcomes and any contextual changes, together with being reviewed by ACT management, Board, or Committee.

Support available from the ACT Office in responding to identified issues

4.8. Colleges are encouraged to seek support from the ACT Office where it will assist the college in making a response. The Quality Department is the initial point of contact for such issues. While the list is not exhaustive, the ACT Office may provide support in the following areas:

- Interpreting data and using software that supports analysis of the data,

- Provision of additional available data relevant to the issue, including benchmarking data both internal and external to the ACT,

- Technical support in making a response through Tickit,

- Clarification of relevant ACT policy, procedure, rules, and guidelines,

- Clarification on ACT processes, including the responsibilities and functions of its boards and committees, and

- Provision of advice on possible response strategies to issues.

5. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Academic Quality Committee	13 December 2019	13 December 2019	New document
2	Academic Quality Committee	13 October 2023	13 October 2023	Improved alignment with Quality Management Policy and Affiliated College Risk and Compliance Reporting Framework

Any hard copy of this electronic document may not be current as the ACT regularly reviews its guidelines. The latest version can be found online at https://www.actheology.edu.au/documents/