

# LEADING COURSES

Answers for Deakin staff who offer students  
a brilliant education where they are  
and where they want to go

## CHAPTER 8: COURSE GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE



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## CHAPTER 8: COURSE GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

This chapter explains:

- processes for course approvals, revisions, continuations and discontinuations
- the integrated system for course and unit reviews
- external peer review of assessment requirements.

Higher education courses offered by Deakin must be approved either by the Academic Board (award courses) or faculty boards (non-award courses) and are subject to review to ensure their ongoing quality, viability and alignment with the Standards for Higher Education. Courses are also accredited by professional bodies where this is required for graduates to practise, for benchmarking purposes or to attain external validation of the quality and relevance.

The processes for course approval, revision and review are set out in [Deakin's Higher Education Courses Approval and Review Procedure](#) and explained below.

Course proposal and review templates can be on the [Course Approvals](#) site.

### COURSE APPROVALS

#### What are the key steps for approving new and revised courses and what timelines should I follow?

##### *New award courses*

Approval of new award courses (including new combined, dual or joint courses) has two stages:

1. strategic course approval
2. academic course approval.

The process can be broken into six steps.

Six steps to NEW course approval	In more detail
<b>Step 1: Make the strategic case</b>	<p>Course proposer:*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) documents the strategic case for the new course using the <a href="#">Strategic Course Proposal template</a>, with input from Marketing via the faculty marketing manager and Finance via the faculty finance manager</li> <li>(2) has the proposal endorsed by the executive dean (through faculty executive), then</li> <li>(3) sends it to the faculty curriculum team who submit it via an online system—the Course Approval Management System (CAMS).</li> </ol>
<b>Step 2: Get endorsement from Course Reference Group</b>	<p>The Course Reference Group meets every fortnight. It provides feedback, assistance and advice if anything is amiss in the strategic proposal and requests formal independent advice from Marketing and Finance. Members include the Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning (chair), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and representatives from Academic Governance and Standards, Marketing, Finance and Deakin International. The course proposer is invited to talk about the proposal at meetings.</p> <p>Proposals for new higher degrees by research must also be endorsed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Performance Enhancement, before they can be approved on strategic grounds.</p>

Six steps to NEW course approval	In more detail
<b>Step 3: DVCE approves the strategic proposal</b>	The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education approves the strategic proposal, which then proceeds to the next step.
<b>Step 4: Create the academic proposal</b>	<p>Course proposer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) completes the <a href="#">Academic Course Proposal or Combined Course Proposal template</a></li> <li>(2) has the proposal endorsed by the faculty board</li> <li>(3) sends it to the faculty curriculum team who submit it via CAMS.</li> </ol> <p>This step may take place before approval is given for the strategic proposal.</p>
<b>Step 5: Review by Course Standards Committee</b>	The Course Standards Committee (a committee of Academic Board) ensures that the proposed course meets the Standards for Higher Education and Deakin academic policies and, if so, recommends approval to Academic Board on academic grounds (if not, it provides feedback or requests further information).
<b>Step 6: Approval by Academic Board</b>	<p>The Academic Course Proposal is submitted to the Academic Board for final approval, generally for a five-year period (but only after strategic approval is given by the DVCE).</p> <p>Once final approval is given by the Academic Board, the course can then be marketed and implemented, unless CRICOS registration is also required (see below).</p>

\* The course proposer may be the intended course director, head of school or other discipline leader.

### Revisions to award courses

Authority to approve revisions to award courses depends on the nature of the proposed change as follows:

Type of change	Approver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course title</li> <li>• Admission and selection criteria</li> <li>• Course structure or duration</li> <li>• New or revised course requirements that may disadvantage enrolled students</li> <li>• Arrangements for course delivery by or with third parties, including Deakin's controlled entities</li> </ul>	<b>Central</b> —DVCE (strategic approval) and Academic Board (academic approval)
Place or mode of delivery	<b>Central</b> —DVCE
Any other changes to award courses, including course learning outcomes, and units that form part of award courses	<b>Faculty</b> —faculty board

The process for approving course revisions can be broken into the following steps:

<b>Step 1: Make the case</b>	The course director (or other proposer) documents the case for the revision using the <a href="#">Course Revision Proposal template</a> and submits it to the faculty curriculum team. The next step will depend on the nature of the proposed change.
<b>Step 2: Faculty endorsement or approval</b>	<p><b>Where the change can be approved at the faculty level</b>, the faculty curriculum team facilitates its approval by the faculty board. This will be the final approval step.</p> <p><b>Where the change requires central approval</b>, the faculty curriculum team obtains the endorsement of the executive dean (following endorsement of the faculty executive and faculty board where appropriate) and submits the proposal to the Manager, Course Governance and Standards via CAMS.</p>

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<b>Step 3: Central approval where required</b>	<p>Where the change requires central approval, the Manager Course Governance and Standards facilitates:</p> <p>Strategic approval by DVCE on advice of Course Reference Group and, where requested, Course Strategy Group</p> <p>AND (where required)</p> <p>Academic approval by Academic Board on advice of the Course Standards Committee</p> <p>Depending on the nature of the course revision, a change may also need to be made to CRICOS registration (see below).</p>
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Students affected by a course revision should be transferred to the revised version of the course at the earliest opportunity. They must be notified of the change, and an individual study plan must be developed where their progress may be affected.

### ***Non-award courses***

New or revised non-award courses, units or modules are approved by faculty boards with the exception of those offered without charge (MOOCs), which must be approved by the DVCE.

Non-award offerings may include courses, units or modules offered by faculties, either direct or in partnership with third parties (e.g. Deakin College) or other organisations (e.g. professional organisations for professional development purposes). In some cases, successful completion of a non-award course may provide an alternative basis for entry into a Deakin course (e.g. masters qualifying program).

### ***Arrangements with partners***

Where a course proposal involves an academic partnership relating to course delivery, the partnership arrangement must be approved by the:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement—for coursework programs
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Performance Enhancement—for higher degrees by research.

Such a partnership arrangement must be the subject of a written agreement between the University and the partner, drafted or reviewed by the University Solicitor's office in accordance with the [Contracts Policy](#). The agreement must accompany the course proposal so that Academic Board can be confident that the arrangement protects the integrity of the award and compliance with the Standards for Higher Education. Academic Board may approve the course proposal subject to execution of the agreement if it has not already been signed.

For further details about the process for approving academic partnerships involving course delivery, see the [Academic Partnerships Procedure](#).

### ***CRICOS registration requirements***

Where award courses are offered to international students onshore, the following must be registered on CRICOS after approval by Academic Board:

- new courses
- new course locations
- new course titles
- new course duration
- significant changes to the course outcomes or structure—discuss the changes with Deakin International Quality and Compliance to determine if a change to CRICOS registration is required.

Faculty curriculum teams manage the preparation of the CRICOS application and liaise with Deakin International Quality and Compliance for the submission of the application to TEQSA.

An award course offered to international students onshore cannot be advertised to prospective students without [CRICOS registration](#).

Student visa holders may enrol in non-award courses but must also maintain enrolment in a CRICOS-registered course concurrently to ensure they meet their visa conditions. Other temporary visa holders may enrol in non-award courses in accordance with their visa conditions.

**For further information, talk to the [Manager, International Quality and Compliance](#) located in [Deakin International](#).**

### Course approval timelines

Long-term planning will ensure that course proposals are approved in time to meet marketing and other publication deadlines. Where possible, the following indicative timelines should be followed:

Nature of proposal	Key dates	Actions
<b>Minor course revisions and unit-level revisions</b> <b>(For implementation in 2018)</b>	Feb–April 2017	Develop proposal and obtain faculty and central strategic approval
	By end May 2017	Obtain faculty board and Academic Board approval
		Finalise entries to meet 2018 Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) deadline (early June 2017)
	By mid-June 2017	Obtain CRICOS approval if required—before Handbook sign-off
	By end June 2017	Finalise 2018 Handbook entries (published end July 2017)
<b>New course</b>	June–Oct 2017	Develop proposal and obtain faculty and central strategic approval
	<b>By February 2018 (latest)</b>	<b>Obtain faculty board and Academic Board approval</b> —before hard copy marketing sign-off
<b>Significant course revisions</b>	By Feb–Mar 2018	Obtain CRICOS approval if required—before hard copy marketing sign-off
<b>New course title</b>		
<b>Changes to admission requirements* and bonus points</b> <b>(For implementation in 2019)</b>	Feb–Mar 2018	Sign off hard copy marketing materials
	By end May 2018	Finalise entries to meet 2019 VTAC deadline (early June 2018)
	By end June 2018	Finalise 2019 Handbook entries (published end July 2018)

\* The timing of changes to admission requirements may also have implications for provider default under CRICOS— for advice talk to the Manager, International Quality and Compliance.

Your faculty curriculum team will help you plan and prepare for the required approval steps.

### Professional accreditation

Professional accreditation of courses must be obtained where this recognition is required for registration of graduates to practise. It may also be obtained for benchmarking purposes or where it is critical to or assists in maintaining a reputation for quality in the relevant industry or profession.

The timing and application requirements of professional accreditation vary considerably from one accrediting body to another. Faculty curriculum teams manage the process for obtaining and retaining professional accreditation.

The Manager, Course Governance and Standards maintains a central register of accredited courses, noting any refusal to accredit or conditions applied.

## REVIEWS OF AWARD COURSES

### What review processes are in place to ensure the viability and quality of my course?

An integrated system for reviewing courses and units is implemented to ensure their ongoing viability, quality and strategic alignment. This includes:

- review of the quality of units each time they are offered
- annual reviews of coursework programs
- comprehensive (major) reviews of coursework programs—required before course continuation, generally every five years.

Reviews may result in the discontinuation, suspension or revision of courses or units.

#### *Trimester unit reviews*

The quality of coursework units is monitored through the administration of the eVALUate survey every time a unit is offered, in accordance with the [Evaluation of Teaching and Units Procedure](#). For more information about the eVALUate survey and its use see Chapter 7.

A formal quality improvement process is also applied by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education (DVCE) in consultation with SIPU, to ensure that areas of concern for each unit are addressed.

1. A list of units of concern is prepared. This includes units where agreement on any of the following questions is below 60% at any campus: Q1 (learning outcomes), Q2 (learning experiences), Q3 (resources), Q4 (assessment), Q5 (feedback), Q6 (workload), Q7 (teacher quality) and Q11 (overall satisfaction)
2. The list is circulated to faculties with data that includes overall responses, enrolments, response rates, names of unit chairs and campus.
3. Chairs of units develop and implement a plan to address issues identified with appropriate support.
4. Faculties report progress and outcomes against the action plans to the DVCE.

Each year a theme is also selected for independent audit to identify any overarching issues and targets for action.

#### eVALUate 2017

Trimester/ Semester surveyed	Survey run	Results available	Response to areas of concern due*
<b>T1 &amp; S1, 2017</b>	22 May–25 June 2017	10 July 2017	14 Aug 2017
<b>T2, 2017</b>	25 Sept–29 Oct 2017	6 Nov 2017	11 Dec 2017
<b>S2, 2017</b>	6 Nov–3 Dec 2017	11 Dec 2017	30 Jan 2018
<b>T3, 2017</b>	29 Jan–25 Feb 2018	5 March 2018	9 April 2018

\* Subject to revision by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education.

## Annual reviews of coursework programs

Each year course teams undertake annual reviews of all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework courses in accordance with an agreed template and provide to faculty boards a response to any negative change in viability or quality and resulting proposals for course revisions.

The DVCE, in consultation with SIPU and the faculties, manages a central review process to identify and address significant quality and viability issues. The review process has the following steps:

1. SIPU gathers viability, quality and benchmarking data on all courses under review (as determined by the DVCE)
2. Courses of concern are identified with reference to parameters set by the DVCE—the intention is to focus on courses most at risk
3. Data reports identifying courses of concern are provided to faculties which may add courses to the list as appropriate
4. Faculties consider courses of concern and provide action plans, together with an outline of their overall course strategy and future intentions for the course suite
5. The DVCE, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement and senior reports meet with each faculty to discuss.

## Major course review and continuations (coursework programs)

Major course reviews (MCRs) are conducted by the faculty for each course, typically every five years, in accordance with an annual schedule prepared by the DVCE in consultation with the faculties.

This is a key moment in the life-cycle of the course. Course teams comprehensively and systematically review the viability and quality of the course with reference to a broad array of evidence that includes course data, external benchmarks and teaching team experience. Input is also received from advisory boards, other relevant areas of the University and an independent review panel that includes external members.

Courses may be reviewed individually or as part of a suite of nested or related courses. Where courses contain majors, the MCR will apply to all component majors although faculties may choose to complete a separate report for each major.

The review may result in recommendations for course continuation, discontinuation or revision (including new or discontinued units). It should not be assumed that a course will be continued—viability and quality will need to be demonstrated through the MCR documentation. Where this is in doubt, approval for course continuation may be for a shorter period than the usual five years.

The DVCE may grant full or partial exemption from an MCR where a course has undergone a review by a professional accreditation body in the previous 12 months.

MCR and course continuation can be broken into six steps.

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### Step 1: Data pack prepared by SIPU and Marketing

The Strategic Intelligence and Planning Unit (SIPU) prepares a data pack that includes standard quantitative information relating to: student load; retention, success and completion; student satisfaction; graduate outcomes. This is supplemented by additional market information provided by the Marketing Division. The Manager, Course Governance and Standards provides this information to your faculty curriculum team for circulation with the MCR template.

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### Step 2: Review by course team

The course director leads the course team in reviewing the course in consultation with the advisory board, Library, Marketing, Finance and other faculties and areas (as appropriate) with reference to:

- approved [MCR template](#)
- data pack provided by SIPU
- external reference points relevant to the course (including AQF, any discipline standards or professional accreditation requirements)
- external peer review of assessment (see below)
- other feedback and information as appropriate.

The course team drafts the MCR Report (using the template). Reports should be concise and evidence-based.

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<b>Step 3: Review Panel</b>	<p>The draft MCR Report is reviewed by an independent MCR Panel convened and supported by the faculty curriculum team. The panel comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an academic staff member from another school in the faculty</li> <li>• at least two external advisory board members who are representatives from employer groups or professions that employ graduates</li> <li>• an academic staff member from another university with expertise in a related discipline</li> <li>• a representative of a relevant professional association (where appropriate)</li> <li>• a graduate and current student of the course</li> <li>• other members appointed by the faculty board who are not members of the course team.</li> </ul> <p>The panel considers the viability and quality of the course with reference to data and comments on the report, proposed improvement plan and suggestions for course revision using an approved template.</p>
<b>Step 4: Faculty endorsement</b>	<p>The revised MCR Report is endorsed by the head of school involved in delivering the core components of the course and presented to faculty board for endorsement accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comments from the MCR Panel</li> <li>• outlines of the units in the course.</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the outcomes of the MCR, the faculty board also endorses a <a href="#">Course Continuation Proposal</a> (with completed course costing template).</p>
<b>Step 5: Strategic approval of Course Continuation by DVCE</b>	<p>The final MCR Report and Course Continuation Proposal (where applicable) are endorsed by the faculty board and submitted by the faculty curriculum team to the Manager, Course Governance and Standards via CAMS.</p> <p>The MCR Report is considered and the Course Continuation Proposal is approved on strategic grounds by the DVCE (on the advice of Course Reference Group and, where requested, Course Strategy Group).</p>
<b>Step 6: Academic Board approval of Course Continuation</b>	<p>The Course Standards Committee considers the MCR Report and Course Continuation Proposal and ensures that the course continues to meet the Standards for Higher Education. If so, it recommends the proposal to Academic Board, which approves the continuation of the course for a further period (usually five years).</p>

The MCR will normally be carried out during the year before the approval of a course is due to expire and is a pre-condition for approval of continuation of the course by Academic Board. Ideally, MCRs should be completed four months before the course approval expires.

#### Indicative timeline where course approval due to expire 1 January 2018

<b>February 2017</b>	Course team receives data pack from SIPU and starts review
<b>March/April 2017</b>	Draft MCR report completed by course team
<b>May/June 2017</b>	External review panel meeting
<b>August 2017</b>	Report finalised and endorsed by faculty board
<b>September 2017</b>	Report submitted centrally with Course Continuation Proposal
<b>November 2017</b>	Academic Board approves course continuation

**You should start planning for 2018 major course reviews in August 2017** to ensure that information not included in the data packs (including outcomes of peer review of assessment) is available to populate the review report.

Your faculty curriculum team will help you plan and prepare for the required review steps.

### ***Higher degrees by research***

A tiered review process is also implemented for higher degrees by research as follows:

The Research and Research Training Committee reviews the research training activities of faculties and institutes annually with reference to relevant data and self-reviews by faculties. The outcomes are reported to Academic Board.

Comprehensive reviews of HDRs will also now be conducted every five years in accordance with a new requirement recently approved by Academic Board. The reviews will be informed by:

- recommendations from panels convened by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Performance Enhancement that include members external to the University
- external referencing of the success of student cohorts and student satisfaction against comparable courses
- Deakin's strategic priorities
- the results of regular interim monitoring.

## **COURSE DISCONTINUATIONS**

### **When and how are courses discontinued?**

A proposal to discontinue a course may arise from an annual or major course review or other faculty or University review, usually for one or more the following reasons:

- the course has low student enrolments and there is no other strategic reason for its continuation
- the course is being replaced by a new course.

**Course Discontinuation Proposals** are:

1. endorsed by faculty boards and, in the case of HDR, the PVC Research Training and Performance Enhancement and
2. approved by the DVCE (on advice from Course Reference Group and Course Strategy Group where appropriate).

The DVCE may also approve suspensions of student intakes into a course to, for example, allow time to implement a marketing campaign to increase student enrolments before a final decision is made about the viability of the course.

Students affected by the discontinuation of a course must be provided with reasonable opportunities to complete their course within a period determined by the faculty board or to transfer to an equivalent or suitable alternative course. Students are contacted by faculty staff or Deakin International and advised of their options and the maximum period of completion. An individual study plan is developed for each student. For details requirements relating to transitional arrangements, see the [Higher Education Courses Approval and Review Procedure](#), (cl 39-46).

## **EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT**

### **How can I seek external peer feedback to improve assessment methods and assure standards?**

The Higher Education Standards include explicit requirements relating to 'regular external referencing' of 'assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses'.

At Deakin, external peer review (referencing) of assessment is carried out in accordance with course-specific arrangements approved by the faculty that meet the following minimum standards ([Higher Education Courses Approval and Review Procedure](#), cl 26-28):

- sufficient units selected from course or suite of courses to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes relating to discipline knowledge, problem solving, critical thinking and communication (in line with AQF specifications)
- external reviewers selected who are suitably qualified and have current knowledge and skills in the discipline and experience of course leadership
- reviewers evaluate the validity of assessment tasks and level of achievement demonstrated in de-identified samples of study work with reference to nationally agreed external standards (including the AQF and discipline standards where applicable)
- reviewers provided with necessary contextual information, including the learning outcomes, the University's grading schema and marking criteria/rubrics
- review involves the verification of student grades or, preferably, the re-marking of work with grades and marking removed.

Variations to these requirements may be approved by the DVCE on a case-by-case basis. Professional accreditation may satisfy the requirements.

Deakin's requirements accommodate the implementation of one of several models of external peer review of assessment that have been developed by Australian universities. All review methods involve the provision of de-identified unit materials and student work samples for review by experienced staff at one or more partner institutions but differ in terms of the rigour of the review process.

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#### Examples of national models for peer review of assessment

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Approach	Key features
<p><a href="#">Assuring Learning and Teaching Standards through Inter-Institutional Peer Review and Moderation</a> (OLT Project involving 11 Australian universities, including Deakin)</p> <p>See also <a href="#">External Referencing of Standards (ERoS) project</a> that adopted a similar approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One work sample selected from each grade band for one final year assessment task (4 samples in all)</li> <li>• De-identified unit materials and work samples (with grades removed) provided to experienced peer reviewers from two partner institutions</li> <li>• Peer reviewers blind mark work samples using the home institution's criteria in the context of external reference points (e.g. discipline standards, AQF)</li> <li>• Feedback provided on unit content, assessment design and criteria</li> </ul>
<p>Quality Verification System—Group of Eight (Go8), <a href="#">Academic Calibration Process</a>—Innovative Research Universities (IRU)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a process of stratified random sampling, work samples selected from two final year units (Go8: 5 per cent from each grade band with maximum of 25 samples; IRU: minimum 12 samples)</li> <li>• De-identified unit materials and graded work samples provided to one experienced peer reviewer</li> <li>• Peer reviewer agrees or disagrees with grade allocated but does not re-mark</li> <li>• Feedback provided on unit content, assessment design and criteria</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">Achievement Matters: External Peer Review of Accounting Learning Standards</a> (involving Deakin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task nominated that best demonstrates Threshold Learning Outcomes in the discipline and five work samples randomly drawn across all grades</li> <li>• Two experienced reviewers rate de-identified work (with grades and marking removed) using discipline standards and rate validity of task</li> <li>• Before review, calibration occurs to achieve consensus on assessments (not) meeting national standard and assessment design (not) valid</li> <li>• Feedback provided on learning outcomes and assessment tasks in the context of the discipline standards.</li> </ul>

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**Source:** Adapted from Krause, K. and Scott, G. (2014). *Assuring Learning and Teaching Standards through Inter-Institutional Peer Review and Moderation: Final Report of the Project* Sydney; Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

The review process might involve the verification of student grades or the re-marking of work with grades and markings removed. While the former would be less time consuming, the latter, more rigorous process would provide better assurance of the standards of student work.

The outcomes of external review:

- inform the review and improvement of learning outcomes and assessment tasks but must not be used to adjust student grades
- are monitored and reported through the major course review process (see Chapter 7).

For further step-by-step guidance, supporting resources and FAQs see [Deakin's External Peer Review of Assessment Toolkit](#).

This is based on the model for peer review developed through the OLT Assuring Learning and Teaching Standards project (summarised above).

## COURSE GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

### Where can I go for help?

<b>Manager, Course Governance and Standards</b> (DVCE portfolio)	<p>Manages approval of new and revised courses and course continuations and discontinuations</p> <p>Works closely with faculties to facilitate approvals and provides advice on policy requirements and external course-related standards</p>
<b>Manager, Academic Governance</b> (DVCE portfolio)	<p>Manages work of Academic Board and its committees, including Course Standards Committee which evaluates and recommends course proposals on academic grounds</p>
<b>Manager, International Quality and Compliance</b> (DVCGE portfolio)	<p>Ensures that new and revised courses meet requirements of the National Code under ESOS and are registered on CRICOS</p>
<b>Faculty, school and department professional staff</b>	<p>Central curriculum teams coordinate and facilitate course-related processes for the faculty, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• management of course proposals</li> <li>• course reviews (major, annual, trimester unit reviews)</li> <li>• CRICOS registration</li> <li>• unit proposals and review</li> <li>• management of course information, including Handbook and unit guides</li> </ul> <p>The following further activities may be supported by curriculum teams or other faculty or school staff (depending on the faculty):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for faculty board</li> <li>• support for advisory boards</li> <li>• professional accreditation</li> <li>• credit for prior learning</li> </ul> <p>The Business and Law Quality Standards and Accreditation team coordinates major international accreditation projects (e.g. AACSB, EPAS, EQUIS).</p>