

QF035 APIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

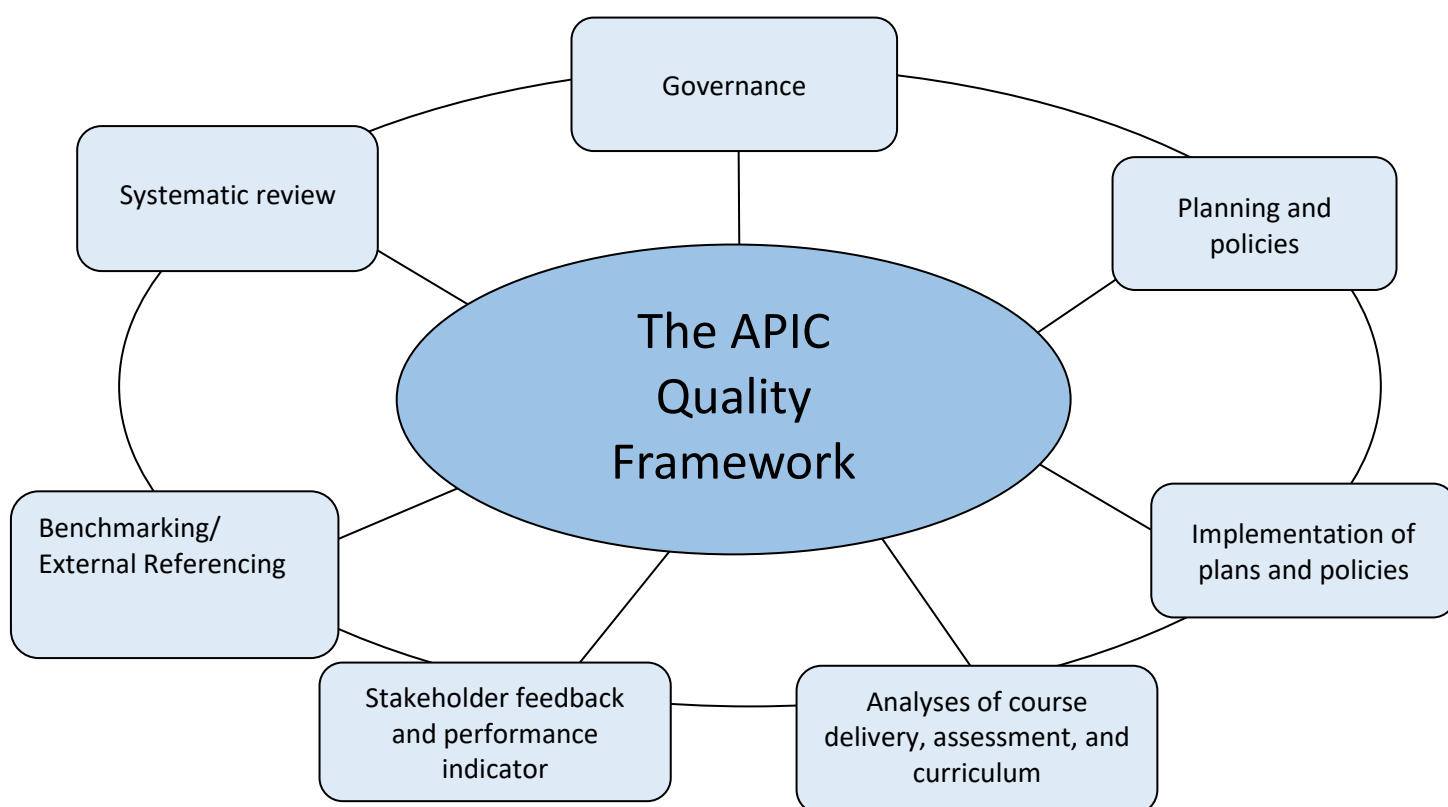
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1. Quality Framework

The Asia Pacific International College (“the College”) has established this quality framework to assure the quality of its operations and its academic outcomes. Quality assurance refers to the planning, policies, attitudes, actions, and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced¹. It requires not only actions internal to the College, but also includes the involvement of external parties.

It involves the governance of the College; strategic and business planning, including risk management; development and dissemination of policies and procedures; course design and evaluation; systems of review involving the collection and use of feedback from stakeholders; the collation and analysis of statistical data (metrics); moderation of assessment and benchmarking activity.



The *Higher Education Standards Framework* (HESF) “provides a model framework which higher education providers can apply for the internal monitoring, quality assurance and quality improvement of their higher education activities”². Therefore, with reference to this framework and examples of best practice in the independent higher education sector, the College has designed this quality framework to provide a robust and

¹ Woodhouse, D. (2009). Putting the ‘A’ into quality. Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne.

² Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
<<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2021L00488>>.

coordinated approach to quality enhancement which embraces “all of institution” in order to foster a continuous quality improvement approach that is integrated into the College’s strategic planning and risk management processes and clearly aligned to the College’s strategic and operational objectives.

To support this Quality Framework the College regularly audits itself against the HESF to ensure that it continues to meet the Standards and any lapses in compliance are identified and monitored, and prompt corrective action is taken. Outcomes of these audits are presented to the Board of Directors annually.

2. Governance

2.1 Overview

The cornerstone of the College’s quality framework is the integrated system of corporate and academic governance outlined in its *Governance Charter*.

The *Governance Charter* provides a solid foundation for management and oversight of the College through a series of interlinking boards and committees (“governance bodies”) with specific responsibilities and terms of reference. Membership of each governance body is designed to provide a basis for informed and independent advice at all levels of the College’s operations, both corporate and academic.

The corporate governing body (Board of Directors) puts in place the necessary delegations to effectively govern the academic aspects of the College as well as facilitating the smooth day-to-day operations of the College by senior management (refer *Delegations Authority Register and Delegations Authority Policy*).

2.2 Review of Governance Structure, Membership, and Delegations

At least once every seven years (or more often if circumstances dictate) the Board of Directors undertakes a review to assess the effectiveness of the overall governance structure of the College (including academic governance) and any delegations it has made in order to identify any improvements that might enhance the organisation’s corporate and academic governance. The Board of Directors will engage suitably qualified individuals to undertake the review.

The review will consider whether:

- the overall governance structure and the type and number of governance bodies is appropriate for the size and mission of the College;
- the terms of reference for each governance body is appropriate and clearly understood;
- the number and categories of membership of each of the governance bodies is appropriate to achieve its functions;
- the balance and type of members is the optimum to achieve the College’s strategic objectives;

- that the delegations currently in place are appropriate and meet the ongoing operational needs of the College;
- the effectiveness of corporate and academic governance processes;
- any other matters determined by the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors shall duly consider the outcomes of the review and any recommendations arising and ensure that agreed actions are implemented.

3. Planning and Review

3.1 Overview

The College engages in a structured regimen of planning through a series of related plans that are reviewed and updated regularly. This planning process not only allows the College to focus on its operations, but also provides a framework of ownership and accountability for College staff.

3.2 Strategic Planning

Best business practice requires that a higher education provider has a current *Strategic plan* which is approved by the governing body, is well understood by stakeholders and indicates that the provider has clarity about its future directions.

To this end the Board of Directors develops a 3-year *Strategic Plan* (to create a culture that is forward-looking rather than reactive, promote unity of purpose, and to clearly articulate the College's enduring mission and near-term strategic directions).

The *Strategic Plan* is developed through the following process:

- Key stakeholders are consulted in the development of the *Strategic Plan*.
- The current *Strategic Plan* (if one exists) is reviewed.
- The College's vision and mission are reviewed to ensure that they reinforce the College's philosophy.
- A review of the Environmental Situation Analysis and the S.W.O.T Analysis is undertaken by senior management (with other stakeholders as appropriate).
- Being mindful of the business environment and the College's strengths and opportunities, key strategic directions are set for the organisation, as well as enrolment targets.
- An action plan is developed to achieve the strategic objectives.
- Each action is allocated to responsible persons and timeframes set for achievement.
- Measures of success are determined for each strategic objective.
- A draft *Strategic Plan* is prepared.
- Feedback on the draft *Strategic Plan* is sought from key stakeholders.

- Based on this feedback a final draft of the *Strategic Plan* is prepared for approval by the Board of Directors.
- The approved *Strategic Plan* is communicated with stakeholders.

The *Strategic Plan* is regularly reviewed to ensure that strategic objectives are being realised and that responsible persons are held accountable for achieving the actions allocated to them within the agreed timeframe.

The *Action Plan to Achieve Strategic Objectives and Measures of Success* are monitored, and where necessary updated, by the Executive Management and regular reports are provided by the CEO to the Board of Directors. Where actions have not been completed in the agreed timeframe the CEO's report will clearly explain why objectives have not been met or have changed and what remedial action has been or will be undertaken to achieve the strategic objective.

During the final year of the life of the *Strategic Plan* a new plan is developed for approval by the Board of Directors. Annual report against the Strategic Plan is reported by the CEO to the Board of Directors.

3.3 Marketing Planning

A 3-year *Marketing Plan* is developed to ensure that the College's total marketing effort is integrated, that its products and services continue to meet and satisfy customers' needs, and that enrolment targets are met.

The *Marketing Plan* is developed by the Marketing Head then reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

The *Marketing Plan* will set out strategies to achieve the enrolments targets outlined in the Strategic Plan and will include:

- an analysis of the College's marketplace and customers;
- an analysis of the College's current product range;
- an analysis of the College's main competitors;
- an analysis of the College's competitive advantage;
- enrolment targets;
- key marketing strategies;
- an action plan to achieve the enrolment targets;
- proposed marketing budget.

The *Marketing Plan* is reviewed regularly to ensure that marketing strategies continue to meet changing situations.

The *Action Plan to Achieve Enrolment Targets* is monitored, and where necessary updated, by the Marketing Head and regular reports provided by the CEO to the Board of Directors analysing the effectiveness of the marketing strategies undertaken to-date. Where marketing strategies have not delivered the forecast number of enrolments the

report will clearly explain what remedial action has been, or will be, undertaken to achieve enrolment targets.

3.4 Financial Planning

The College undertakes financial planning to support the day-to-day running of the College and enable senior management and the Board of Directors to measure financial performance. Financial forecasts will be based on projections of student enrolments, staffing plans, and requirements for facilities and resources for each course offered by the College, aligned with the strategic objectives and enrolment targets outlined in the *Strategic Plan and business Plan*. The assumptions underlying the financial forecasts will be included as part of the forecasts.

The CFO with the CEO Higher Education is responsible for the development of the Financial Forecast for 5 years and the annual budget which are approved by the Board of Directors. Refer to the *Financial Planning and Financial management Procedures*.

3.5 Risk Management Planning Framework and Risk Register

Good corporate governance and academic governance requires that an organisation's governing body regularly monitors potential risks to the College's operations and develops strategies to mitigate risks that may eventuate.

Consequently, the College develops a *Risk Management Framework and Risk Register* with the support of the *Audit and Risk Committee* to systematically identify, analyse, evaluate, monitor, and mitigate risk.

The College faces risks that may affect:

- its reputation, and/or that of its staff and/or stakeholders in regard to the quality of the products and services it provides;
- the achievement of strategic objectives and business plan in the agreed timeframes;
- the integrity of its decisions and processes;
- the safety, security, and well-being of all stakeholders
- its financial viability and financial sustainability
- student load, experience, and outcomes;
- its academic staff profile;
- the achievement of regulatory standing.

Risk management is critical to the overall performance of the College and therefore forms an integral part of the overall planning for the organisation.

The Executive Management involves in the development and review of *Risk Management Framework and Risk Register* with the Audit and Risk Committee for the approval by the Board of Directors. For each category of risk it faces, the *Risk register* will assess the potential consequences and likelihood of an adverse event. Suggested risk

mitigation strategies will then be determined for managing risks with the greatest resources devoted to those risks considered to present a very high or extreme risk as opposed to those risks that are considered to be less consequential.

Risk mitigation strategies document what measures need to be put in place to minimise the threat posed by identified risks. Risk mitigation includes:

- measures aimed at avoiding or minimising the risk;
- measures to reduce the threat posed by the risk, either by reducing the likelihood of the risk and/or its consequences;
- measures aimed at improving the capacity of the College and its staff to deal with actualised threats;
- transferring the threat by shifting the risk to another party via, for example, contracting out or insurance cover; and
- accepting a risk that is outside of our control but monitoring the risk and ensuring that the College has the financial and other capacities to cover associated losses and disruptions.

The *Risk Management register* is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Risk committee in line with the *Reporting Matrices*. During the review an assessment is made of the effectiveness of the risk mitigation strategies proposed for managing and minimising risks that may impact on the operations of the College. Based on this review and assessment an updated *Risk Management Framework* is updated.

The updated *Risk Management Framework and Risk Register* are reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

3.6 Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is undertaken by the College to ensure that the present and future demands for different types of staff are in place to match demand with supply. The *Workforce Plan* includes the strategic context and objectives for ensuring that sufficient, appropriately qualified leaders and operational/support staff are in place to achieve the College's higher education objectives and achieve expected student learning outcomes in accordance with its scale of operations.

The *Workforce Plan* also includes current and planned staff profiles for administration and academic functions of the College.

The *Workforce Plan* is reviewed and updated annually by the CEO Higher Education in line with the *Reporting Matrices*.

3.8 Learning and Teaching Planning (*Replaces the previous Academic Plan*)

The *Learning and Teaching Plan* (L&T Plan) is developed by the Learning and Teaching Committee which provides a roadmap for meeting the learning and teaching goals of the Strategic Plan. This plan is developed for the following two-year period. This plan is approved by the Academic Board. The objectives of the Learning and Teaching plan includes: a valued and shared culture of best-practice in learning and teaching, supported

academic staff, Supported students, apply contemporary learning and teaching technologies and techniques, and drive quality and rigour of assessment practices. The progress against the plan is reported to the Academic Board as in the reporting matrices. The quality of the Learning and Teaching is also measured by the *Learning and Teaching Quality Framework*.

3.9 Scholarship and Research Planning

The Scholarship and Research Plan (S&R Plan) is developed by the Scholarship and Research Committee which provides a roadmap to deliver teaching and learning that engages with advanced knowledge and intellectual inquiry. This plan is developed for the following two-year period. This plan is approved by the Academic Board. The objectives of the Scholarship and Research plan includes: a valued and shared culture of best practice in research imbedded in learning and teaching, supported academic staff, supported students and distinctive graduates and the signature learning experience. The progress against the plan is reported to the Academic Board as in the reporting matrices.

3.10 Technology Planning

To manage its technology infrastructure the College maintains Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and software systems that support its operations.

The College develops and maintains an *ICT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan* to prepare APIC in the event of extended service outages for its ITS infrastructure.

3.11 Dissemination of Plans

To gain maximum benefit from the planning process it is imperative that relevant information relating to planning is disseminated to various stakeholders in a regular and timely manner.

The Executive Management will design and implement an appropriate dissemination strategy for different stakeholder groups to ensure that appropriate information is made available to them by various media. A key component of this strategy will be the articulation of the College's mission and goals.

4. Policies and Procedures

The College has developed an integrated suite of policies, procedures and forms to provide guidance and give certainty to operational processes, both administrative and academic. These documents form an integral part of the overall quality framework.

It is essential that the College's policies and procedures are appropriate to the scale and mission of the College, properly approved, disseminated throughout the organisation, fully implemented, and systematically reviewed. Refer to *Policy Framework Policy* which

includes the process of Policy development, review, and dissemination. The *Policy Register* records the version control of the policies.

5. Course development and review

The Higher Education Standards Framework requires that a higher education provider maintains appropriate academic standards for all the higher education courses it delivers.

The College has adopted a *Course Development Review and Improvement Policy* to provide appropriate frameworks for course development, continuous and comprehensive review in the context of continuous and comp quality improvement.

6. Stakeholder feedback and Monitoring and Analysis of Student's Performance

It is essential that the College's governance bodies consider and act on relevant data such as teaching evaluations, student feedback, student attrition, progress rates, grade distributions, course completions and graduate satisfaction.

The College collects a variety of data for analysis including:

- Stakeholder feedback from participants, educators, graduates and employers; and
- a defined set of metrics determined by the Academic Board which may include access and participation, attrition, retention and success rates and grade distributions for subjects and courses.

6.1 Stakeholder Feedback

As part of its quality management system a higher education provider must obtain and act on regular, valid and reliable feedback from stakeholders to improve the quality of the courses and its higher education operations. Refer to the *Students Feedback Policy*.

6.2 Monitoring and Analysis of Student's Performance

The collection, analysis, and reporting of statistical data is recognised as a key component of a robust quality management system. The College will produce at least annually a set of standard reports on student information and academic outcomes (including rates of retention, progression, and completion of various student cohorts) to assist managers and governance bodies to systematically assess how the College is performing on key measures of educational performance and to identify areas for improvement through the following process:

- The Academic Board will determine the data to be collected and the processes by which the data are collated and analysed by the Learning and Teaching Committee.
- As part of the statistical data collection, data will be collected by identified student cohorts, analysed, monitored and the findings used to inform admission

policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those cohorts.

- The Learning and Teaching Committee will design standard reports to enable comparisons to be made both within the College and against other higher education providers and sector norms.
- Benchmark attrition, progression, and completion rates. Benchmark student satisfaction and outcomes (QILT and other publicly available data sets) of each course with external reference points.
- The reports will track trends over time and provide comparisons between cohorts of students (such as domestic and international), different campuses/ locations, different courses and the various disciplines offered by the College.
- Analyse Trend of student performance, progression, students' feedback, student experience, attrition, completion and pass rates and the Learning and Teaching committee will seek recommendation from the Academic Board on the analysis for any improvement actions.
- The Learning and Teaching Committee will develop an annual report for presentation to the Academic Board which will include the recommended improvement actions with clear allocation of responsibility, resources and timelines in order to improve standards, course outcomes and student satisfaction for the Academic Board's consideration and endorsement.

7. Benchmarking

To enable the College to assess its performance against its peers it will compare its performance against other appropriate higher education providers to identify and act upon areas requiring improvement.

Benchmarking involves the systematic collection of data and information with a view to making relevant comparisons of aspects of an organisation's performance with peer institutions. "Benchmarking is the process of continually comparing the performance of an organisation against the performances of others with the intention of using the outcomes of comparison for the purposes of improvement."³

Benchmarking assists an institution to:

- undertake a self-evaluation of performance and process;
- better understand the processes which underpin organisational performance in an increasingly competitive environment;
- identify strengths and weaknesses in performance;
- measure and compare the College to other higher education providers in the sector to determine what they are doing better (or not) and why;
- develop new improved approaches to enhance best practice;

³ Yorke M. (1999). Benchmarking Academic Standards in the UK, Tertiary Education and Management 5: 81-96

- obtain data to support decision-making;
- determine actions to improve processes and approaches in order to increase performance;
- strengthen institutional identity by enhancing institutional reputation⁴.

The Board of Directors has delegated the planning, management, and oversight of all benchmarking activity to the Academic Board, which has developed and approved a *Benchmarking Policy* that details the benchmarking quality activities undertaken by the College. The *Benchmarking Register* records the external referencing and benchmarking activities for continuous quality improvement.

8. Grade Distribution and Moderation of Assessment

Validation and moderation are processes of ensuring that assessment validly and reliably measures achievement of expected learning outcomes in a subject. The College quality assures the assessment process by moderating grades as well as moderating individual assessment items. Refer to the *Assessment and Moderation Policy*.

9. Keeping Students Informed

The College will ensure that students are given comprehensive, timely and accurate notice of any changes to the College's operations, including any consequences that may affect their choice of, or ability to participate in their course of study.

10. Shared Services

A Shared services agreement (SSA) is a formal arrangement approved by the Board of Directors. This agreement is to ensure ongoing quality in delivering services including student recruitment, finance management, technology management, placements, and other services as stated in the *Shared services agreement (SSA), Delegations Authority Policy and Delegations Authority Register*. These services of the parties involved are monitored and reported to the Board against the scope of services, agreement, and the performance/ quality measures as in the reporting matrices.

11. Monitoring and Ensuring Regular Reporting to the Boards/ Committees

The *Reporting Matrices* are the workplan for each board or committees. These reporting matrices are developed based on the terms of reference of each of the committees or board. These matrices are approved by the Board of Directors for the following year. The Quality team will develop these reporting matrices and the *Governance Calendar*.

⁴ European Union (2008). Benchmarking in European Higher Education, Brussels.

12. Associated Documents

- Governance Charter
- Delegations Authority Register
- Governance Calendar
- Reporting Matrices
- Strategic Plan
- Business Plan
- Marketing Plan
- Financial Planning and Management Procedure
- Risk Management Framework
- Risk Register
- Workforce Plan
- Learning and Teaching Plan (Replaces the Academic Plan)
- Scholarship and Research Plan
- Benchmarking Policy
- Benchmarking Register
- ICT Disaster Recovery
- Business Continuity Plan
- Course Development Review and Improvement Policy
- Student Assessment and Moderation Policy
- Shared Service Agreement (SSA)
- Delegations Authority Policy
- Assessment and Moderation Policy
- Learning and Teaching Quality Framework

13. Version history

Category	Corporate
Document Owner	General Manager, Higher Education Quality
Responsible	Board of Directors
Review Date	4 August 2024
References and Legislation	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards (TEQSA) Act 2011 (Cth) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth) The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018) Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth).

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Board of Directors	04 August 2022	Document creation and initial approval
1.1	CEO	22 August 2023	To reflect on the new policies that were approved in the last year.