Higher Education Research & Development

Taking it on board: quality audit findings for higher education governance

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Taking it on board: quality audit findings for higher education governance

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An examination of the reports of quality audits of Australian universities is used to identify quality assurance issues which emerge as more or less important for governing bodies and academic boards respectively. For governing bodies, many issues identified in audit reports reflect established good practice, such as a need to evaluate the governing body's own performance and for the governing body to be well informed about the institution. Audit findings in respect of academic boards, however, indicate a need for greater clarity about board roles, coupled with improved leadership and more attention to quality assurance of academic activities. It is suggested that governing bodies may need to pay greater attention to ensuring that academic boards are able to fulfil their important roles in academic quality assurance and leadership.

Introduction

If a generally applicable definition of governance is 'the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account' (ANAO, 2003, p. 6), Australian universities exhibit the familiar systems of trustee, faculty and management processes (Marginson, 2004):

- processes of the governing body or council, with overall authority for overseeing the management or the institution, chaired by the university chancellor, a non-executive position (trustee governance);
- processes of the academic governance structure, an internal committee structure responsible for oversight of academic activities and policy-making (collegial governance); and
- processes of the executive group, which has overall responsibility for achievement of objectives, through hierarchical line management authority or responsibility for

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defined outcomes, under the leadership of a President or Vice-Chancellor (management).

Each of these systems plays a role in developing and implementing plans, assuring quality and being accountable for outcomes. The precise classification of internal university governance systems continues to be open to interpretation, however, and it may be that there are more governance systems that should be recognized, such as the governance of quasi-independent research institutes (Duderstadt, 2004) and the individual and internalized professional self-governance of academics. Nonetheless, in Australia, committees sit at the apex of two of these core governance processes: the governing body, a special type of committee and a central academic board that is accountable to the governing body.

The roles of university governing bodies are set out in university enabling legislation and a number of threshold requirements are contained in National Governance Protocols, introduced in 2003 by the Commonwealth government as a condition of approval for certain forms of student loan. Australian universities are regularly exhorted to improve the effectiveness of their governing bodies (Hoare, 1995; West, 1998; DEST, 2002; Nelson, 2005), and university governing bodies in Australia now must have no more than 22 members. Although external members are strongly in the majority, most governing bodies continue to provide for elected staff and student members in addition to a majority of external members.

Responsibility for managing academic quality assurance processes is usually delegated by the governing body to an academic board or senate, which may be a committee of the governing body. Although the term 'shared governance' is not widely used in Australian higher education, the enabling legislation and structural arrangements for most universities include provision for a board charged with oversight, under delegated authority, of the academic affairs of the institution. In October 2005, a national conference of Chairs of Australian Academic Boards and Senates issued a policy paper on the general purpose and function of academic boards; it states that:

> The board is the principal policy-making and advisory body on all matters relating to and affecting a university's teaching, research and educational programs. It is also responsible for assuring academic quality including academic freedom, academic integrity, assessment, admissions, and research conduct. (NCCABS, 2005, p.3)

This paper compares audit findings in respect of these two highest governance committees for Australian universities—governing boards and the central academic board—identify those quality assurance issues that emerge from audit as more or less important for each type of body, as well as some priorities for improvement. The extent to which audit findings reflect the improvement priorities of government and the literature is considered, as are the implications of the findings in relation to academic quality assurance for both governing boards and academic boards.

Since 2002, AUQA has been conducting and publishing quality audit reports on Australian universities, and on a small number of other higher education institutions authorized by government to accredit their own awards, referred to collectively as

self-accrediting institutions. At the time of writing, public reports are available (AUQA, 2006) for 36 of 43 institutions subject to AUQA audit. Audits in AUQA's first cycle consider the full range of institutional activities but emphasize quality assurance of academic activities in pursuit of institutional objectives. Audit reports contain commendations for good practice, as well as affirmations and recommendations, the latter referring to significant areas in need of attention.

Some features of the analysis should be noted. Generalizations drawn from audit findings, which are designed to be specific to the institution being audited, do not convey as complete a picture as a research study of the same topic, although audit findings provide pointers to sector-wide issues. The audit reports were produced at differing times over the four years from 2002 to 2006, during which time some governance concerns have waned while new ones have arisen, and the new National Governance Protocols were implemented. The examples quoted, which are all taken from published audit reports, are used for illustrative purposes only and should not be taken as identifying a particular institution for censure or praise. The names of institutions have been omitted.

In Australia university governing bodies are known as councils, senates or boards of trustees, while the academic committee is variously termed the academic board, academic senate, academic council or academic committee. For convenience, in this paper the more common terms are used: the governing body is referred to as the council, and the central academic committee is referred to as the academic board.

Governing boards: audit commendations and recommendations

All 36 published AUQA audit reports contain a discussion of the operation of the governing body, and 28 include commendations and/or recommendations specifically relating to the council and its functioning. Commendations and recommendations are fairly evenly balanced.

For the most part, the discussion of councils addresses a limited range of themes relating to their effectiveness. A small number of institutions receive broad commendations for operating well, for example, 'AUQA commends the effective role played by council in the governance of the University'. Even if there is no specific commendation, the audit panel may have concluded there are no major issues, as in the following examples:

> The governance activities of the senate are now generally effective.

> The Audit Panel concluded that the university council is a self-reflective body committed to providing high-quality governance to the university.

Some themes address 'enablers', or activities that are required to empower councils to better carry out their responsibilities (Lorsch & MacIver, 1989), as in the discussion below on management information. Other comments ask council to take on responsibility for ensuring action occurs, but do not reflect a judgement on the council's performance.

Commitment to quality assurance (and review) of council operations

A recurring motif in audit reports is the need for the university council to lead by example in demonstrating an understanding and application of the methods of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement in its own activities, as in this approving comment from an audit panel:

> Council is currently reviewing its own effectiveness, indicating commitment from the top to a philosophy of quality improvement.

Similar comments in other audit reports confirm that attention to council's internal processes and assuring the quality of its operations are viewed as important by AUQA:

> AUQA commends the university council for demonstrating its leadership and commitment to quality assurance by itself participating in a process of self-reflection and improvement.

> AUQA commends the council for initiating and conducting a self-evaluation of its performance in 2002 and for its use of the results to review the induction process for new council members.

> AUQA commends […] council for the establishment of a performance evaluation framework that is assisting it to evaluate the effectiveness of its own performance and make improvements where necessary.

> AUQA commends the regular and productive monitoring and self-review of the university council.

> AUQA recommends that council systematically examine its decision-making so as to ensure superior outcomes for the university.

AUQA's support for a comprehensive approach to quality improvement by one council is evident in the following commendation:

> AUQA commends the council of […] for its planning and review processes, such as the Chancellor's self-evaluation interviews and the annual planning conference, which are the key elements in the council's continuous improvement processes.

Actively seeking internal accountability

Another theme is the need for council to actively hold university managers accountable for both outcomes and processes. The following quote is worthy of examination, as it highlights several aspects of internal accountability commended or recommended by audit panels:

> AUQA commends the council of […] for its commitment to quality, and for adopting a pro-active approach to the governance of the university and to the maintenance of standards of accountability and responsibility.

The commentary in the audit report helps decode this commendation, which is given in part because the council had itself identified a number of institutional operations requiring review. That is, the council has shown itself in this case to be well enough

informed about university operations to recognize significant areas of risk that may not have been examined. This finding is not to suggest that a council should become involved in management of the organization. Rather, it reflects an expectation by quality auditors that university councils should take a continuous quality improvement view of university operations. To this end, councils should be informed of the results of significant reviews and given evidence that there is regular evaluation of all major activities of the university.

This commendation also points to a council whose members are enthusiastic and engaged as well as knowledgeable. Some people are surprised to find that auditors are interested in more than plans, policies and processes, although everyone knows that people and their interactions are mostly responsible for whether any system works or not. An assessment, admittedly in broad terms, of a governance culture is, therefore, often part of the audit process.

Monitoring the performance of the chief executive

A more specific theme, also related to accountability, is the need for council to assess the performance of the chief executive. This is an area of responsibility that AUQA audit panels found significant enough to comment on in two 2004 audit reports, one example being:

> AUQA commends the […] council for developing effective quality assurance processes as part of its governance responsibility, including the use of 360-degree feedback processes to monitor the performance of the Vice-Chancellor.

Of course, today's significant 'good practice' may become tomorrow's norm, especially given the influence of the National Governance Protocols. Some of the findings in audit reports were made before the Protocols came into effect. The following quote, from a 2005 audit report, seems to reflect a shift in expectations from 2004:

> Council has yet to embrace contemporary practices of accountability and quality enhancement for its own governance practices. The council does not have a formal process for setting objectives and reviewing the performance of the Vice-Chancellor.

Roles and governance structures

There is a comparative dearth of recommendations on the role of councils. Audit reports contain little to suggest that individual members of council do not understand their roles and responsibilities and some commendations to indicate they do. However, there are enough comments in audit reports to suggest an ongoing need for councils to monitor the extent to which their committee structures are appropriate and efficient, two examples being:

> [AUQA recommends that] the council and university review the role and functions of the […] committee in the context of the considerable additional time commitment required of the council members serving on that committee.

> [AUQA recommends that] the university review the respective roles and functions of the
> board of trustees, board of governors and executive committee with a view to developing
> a model of corporate governance and management that will sustain the university's ongo-
> ing development in the Australian higher education sector.

AUQA has affirmed the outcome of a council self-review where the institution states an 'intention of more clearly delineating the governance management inter-face'. Self-review in a few other institutions has highlighted a desire by councils for earlier and stronger involvement in strategic planning:

> Noting the positive relationship that exists between the senate, the executive and the wider
> […] community, AUQA commends the recent reflections on how to better provide more
> constructive input into the strategic planning process and the formulation of an action plan
> for self-improvement.

Audits have generally found induction processes for council members to be satisfactory, representing a considerable change in practice from a few years ago (Baird, 2004), and confirmed by a recent survey of practice (Swansson *et al.*, 2005). There is a recommendation in one audit report to strengthen induction for council and academic board members.

It is notable that there is little commentary in audit reports on the role of council in defending academic freedom. And, although many councils demonstrate strong involvement with local stakeholders, especially for regional institutions (Winter *et al.*, 2005), there is comparatively little comment on the involvement of council in fostering regional engagement, the following commendation being a rare example:

> AUQA commends the […] council for its diversity of expertise and the relationships estab-
> lished with the local and regional community, the close links developed with the […]
> government, and the level of positive interaction with the university community.

Performance monitoring, information for decision-making and risk management

A considerable number of recommendations in audit reports concern the need for better management reporting, to assist in strategic decision-making by council:

> [AUQA recommends that] […] develop systematic processes for reporting to council on
> achievements against the major directions for the university, and that council annually
> consider and review as necessary the university's strategic directions.

> [AUQA recommends that] […] continue to develop key performance indicators that are
> clearly linked to faculty and divisional outcomes and to the priorities in the strategic plan
> and that the format in which they are presented enables council to easily assess perfor-
> mance against targets.

While several institutions have been commended for their use of management information systems or reporting tools, such as a Balanced Scorecard, it is evident that there is room for improvement.

Institutional approaches to risk management are also frequently discussed because many universities state in their self-reviews that they have implemented risk management systems. In some cases, the audit confirms this:

> AUQA commends […] for demonstrating that it is clearly aware of what is required to effectively manage risk for the preservation and enhancement of the university's reputation, particularly in relation to its core functions of teaching, learning and research.

> AUQA commends […] for the development and ongoing implementation of a comprehensive, benchmarked risk management framework across the university.

In other cases, however, self-reviews have identified a need for improvement and the audit findings encourage a more systematic approach.

Oversight of controlled entities

Many Australian universities have established corporate bodies under the control of the university or the governing body but separate from it. Oversight of these bodies by council poses particular challenges and several state auditors-general have drawn attention to this situation as an area of risk. Not surprisingly, AUQA audits pay some attention to councils' arrangements in respect of controlled entities, resulting in a range of comments, one commendation and two recommendations in published audit reports. One recommendation highlighted the need for councils to understand the rationale for setting up controlled entities and the nature of the governance relationship.

Academic quality assurance

A less significant theme in audit reports, but one that is relevant to audit findings in respect of academic boards, concerns the need for university councils to be confident of the academic quality assurance measures in place within the institution, so that each council can 'inform and balance its fiduciary governance responsibilities with its academic governance responsibilities'. In one audit report, AUQA recommends the university 'ensure that its governance and management processes enable academic representatives to play a substantive role in the academic affairs of the university, and in recommending to Council on significant academic initiatives'.

Academic boards: audit commendations and recommendations

Nearly all of the 36 published audit reports contain some mention of the academic board, and 22 reports include commendations and/or recommendations that specifically mention an academic board or board committees. While an absence of specific recommendations and comments is likely to mean that the individual academic board is viewed as operating effectively, there are very many more recommendations than commendations in findings about academic boards.

The number of commendations on academic boards is too small to allow for the identification of any particular trend, although academic board oversight and control of reviews of faculties and schools are mentioned in two cases. Attention to internal quality assurance processes is viewed as an important feature of good practice, as in this commendation:

> AUQA commends the academic board of […] for its use of a quality management frame-
> work that includes annual board workplans and for the board's active consideration of the
> university's academic performance.

Recommendations fall overwhelmingly into three categories, all broadly related to the role and authority of academic boards. The first category addresses clarity in academic board roles, while the second and third categories concern academic leadership and academic quality assurance respectively.

Clarification of academic board roles

Many Australian higher education institutions have reviewed their academic boards over the past few years, and have implemented changes to board charters and functions as a result. However, several audit reports contain affirmations and recommendations indicating a lack of certainty over whether academic boards are fulfilling the responsibilities given to them:

> AUQA affirms the intention of […] to review outcomes from the review of the academic
> board to ensure that it is effectively fulfilling its functions as the principal academic
> authority within the university.

Several audit reports also comment on the need for clearer delegation of authority, from council to the board, or from the board to its subcommittees.

In considering the functions of academic boards, audit panels take as their primary reference point the institution's own statements about these bodies' responsibilities. That is, audit panels do not normatively define the roles of academic board, although they are likely to be familiar with the functions of such bodies in other institutions, but rather they seek to examine whether the actual roles played in practice match assigned responsibilities.

Academic leadership

Several audit reports discuss the academic board's particular function of leading collegial processes of debate, discussion and review, often in critical terms:

> The academic board has not provided strong leadership to the university's academic
> community.

Three other examples convey the overall tenor of audit report findings:

> [AUQA recommends that] […] reinforce the university academic board's strategic role in
> relation to the [strategic plan] objectives and the strategic and operational planning frame-
> work with the purpose of ensuring that university academic board provides strategic
> leadership on academic issues.

> That […] consider ways in which the academic board could play a role in improving the
> intra-university communication and discussion of broad educational issues (both internal
> and external).

> [AUQA recommends that] […] clarify for all staff the intended role to be played by
> academic senate in fostering collegial discussion and debate.

Comments in other audit reports show, however, that several academic board chairs have taken action over the past few years to increase the amount of discussion and debate on 'hot topics' or issues of strategic significance to the institution.

Academic quality assurance responsibilities

Many academic boards in Australian universities are specifically charged with responsibility for academic quality assurance, in terms such as: 'Academic board has a responsibility to assess the quality of, and provide direction to, the academic work of the University, including teaching, learning, scholarship, research and research training' (UTS, 2006). Given this explicit responsibility, and its importance for the quality of Australian university education and research, audit panels have not hesitated to make recommendations and comments designed to improve boards' abilities to fulfil their roles. In this regard, the focus is generally on academic boards' responsibilities for learning and teaching, although audit reports occasionally discuss the role of the academic board in relation to research:

> AUQA affirms the need for […] to enhance its processes for the approval and monitoring of academic programs.

> [AUQA recommends that] the academic board strengthen its ability to maintain an oversight of the academic activities of the university and, in particular, assure the quality of teaching and learning activities. Particular attention to relationships between the academic board and its sub-committees and the faculty boards is required.

> [AUQA recommends that] academic senate reconsider the various mechanisms it has in place for assuring the quality of teaching and learning within […] to ensure that they are able to effectively and efficiently support continuous improvement of the university's academic activities.

> [AUQA recommends that] the academic board of […] plays a stronger role in advising on quality improvement across all aspects of teaching and learning, including offshore programs.

Although there are several hundreds of commendations and recommendations on teaching and learning in AUQA audit reports, only in a small number of cases do audit panels specifically recommend that academic boards, rather than, say, the executive, take responsibility for improvements:

> That in line with the university's stated commitment to introduce systematic course reviews, the […] academic board put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the formal review of all […] courses is completed within the first five-year cycle.

> That the […] academic board review the university's entrance criteria, including English language requirements, in accordance with relevant national and international standards, and asserts control over these criteria through a robust monitoring system.

> That the academic senate review the university's articulation arrangements, especially regarding community colleges, with a view to establishing a comprehensive approval and monitoring system and schedule.

Very occasionally, audit reports ask both the academic board and the executive to take responsibility for action, indicating the complexity of views on responsibility in today's university:

> That academic board and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (academic and research) ensure that schools comply with the policy requiring the annual preparation and presentation of course reports.

An acknowledged area of academic risk discussed at length in audit reports, although not always directly in relation to academic boards, is transnational or offshore education, that is a situation where an Australian university program is taught to students based in another country, either through an offshore campus or through some form of partnership with a local provider. Transnational education raises many issues in regard to academic equivalence but also requires special skills in relationship management. For most universities a key challenge is to ensure that established academic quality assurance processes are known by those responsible for internationalization strategies, while ensuring that academic processes take sufficient note of the risks and requirements of international partnerships. The following recommendation gives some sense of these challenges:

> [AUQA recommends that] […] undertake a major review of the quality assurance systems in place for the design, approval, delivery and review of transnational programs, including in the scope of the review the respective roles of the academic board, international committee and entrepreneurial committee, and also incorporating a detailed assessment of the effectiveness of quality assurance systems being applied in respect of the current and recently-terminated transnational programs.

Taken as a whole, the audit reports suggest that a proportion of academic boards struggle to perform their quality assurance and leadership roles. A small number of recommendations hint at some barriers to be overcome:

> [AUQA recommends that] the […] academic board ensure that the chairs and members of its committees are assisted in developing an improved understanding of their important quality assurance roles.

> That the […] executive move forward with the stated intention to involve the chair of academic board in meetings of the university executive dealing with academic matters, and that the chair of the academic board be more broadly involved in academic strategic planning with the university executive.

Priorities for improvement

University councils

AUQA audit reports do not suggest widespread dysfunctionality among university governing bodies. On the contrary, they identify many improvements that have been made already to council operations and they record instances where council members are well supported in performing their roles.

In many respects, the themes identified in AUQA audit reports match improvements that have been canvassed in other arenas. This consistency is not entirely

unexpected given the sustained attention paid to university governing bodies by the Commonwealth government, and also by some State and Territory governments in Australia, over the past decade. Several themes identified as good practice in earlier audit reports have been formalized in the National Governance Protocols, such as monitoring the performance of the Chief Executive Officer, evaluating the performance of council members, and the provision of induction programs. It remains to be seen whether the Protocols will be able to assist in raising the bar in future, although certainly they have prompted some higher education institutions to provide much more active support to their councils. A useful revision to the Protocols could see them include mention of continuous quality improvement.

The Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training recently set out a list of further improvements for university governing bodies (Bishop, 2006). While some areas, such as permitted categories of council membership, are not addressed in quality audit, most others resonate with themes identified from audit reports, including:

- the need for all council members to be well informed about the institution and to take a leadership role in supporting differentiation of mission;
- the importance of adequate data and reports for ongoing performance monitoring; and
- the management of controlled entities.

The audit themes also bear some resemblance to areas studied in a 2004 report to the Committee of University Chairmen on good practices in governance. The six areas that were chosen were ones 'where there was high priority and interest in the higher education sector in exploring practice' (CHEMS, 2004, p. 3), namely:

- selecting, inducting and supporting governors;
- involving the governing body;
- governing body relationships with senate/academic board and committee structures;
- overseeing commercial and third-leg activities;
- measuring institutional performance; and
- reviewing the effectiveness of governance.

It is interesting that this report identified relations between the governing body and the academic board as an area of priority, as this topic has not been discussed in Australia recently and audit reports have not identified significant issues about the relationship *per se*. However, given the audit report findings in respect of academic boards, it is arguable that academic quality assurance has been a blind spot for Australian university governing bodies. That is, councils might now pay additional attention to the effectiveness of academic boards and ways of supporting them.

Academic boards

From audit reports, priorities for improvement for academic boards revolve around clarifying their roles and strengthening their capacities to both lead and to assure

quality, that is ensuring their authority is more than symbolic. Action can be taken by individual institutions to address specific audit recommendations in regard to academic boards, but it is likely that the findings, taken together, are pointing to fundamental governance issues identified elsewhere in the literature (Shattock, 2002; Lapworth, 2004).

The CHEMS study referred to above finds a situation in regard to academic boards in UK institutions not dissimilar to that described in Australian universities (Marginson & Considine, 2000), where the previous roles of many academic boards in strategic planning and policy advice have been substantially reduced. Increasingly, the development of institutional strategies belongs to the executive, or the executive in concert with the governing body, with the academic board playing a consultative and advisory role. These developments have led to a polarization of views on the future of academic boards: some institutions have reaffirmed a commitment to collegial governance, while others are asking whether academic boards are needed (CHEMS, 2004, p. 52).

If academic boards are to find a way forward, they could begin with a consideration of the reasons why they are having difficulty in achieving leadership in collegial processes of debate and academic quality assurance, despite the best efforts of many academic board chairs to encourage innovation. Three possible reasons relate to authority, skills and trust.

An academic board's authority is founded on the discipline-specific expertise of its members. If the academic committee structure within institutions, running through faculty and school committees can be thought of as an organizational 'spine', it is clear that line management now constitutes a second 'backbone', and there can be considerable uncertainty over the locus of authority. For example, if an academic board seeks to monitor the implementation of a new academic policy, are faculty deans obliged to provide this information? Despite the powers assigned to academic boards, internal university governance structures which rely on expert authority appear to be struggling to compete with those based on positional authority (or a combination of positional and expert authority).

A related area concerns the extent to which the expertise possessed by academic board members is the most useful type of expertise for the board's functions. Academic board members, aside from *ex officio* members, are often elected. Even if they have status as discipline-based experts, they may not be leaders in the scholarship of learning or teaching. Although a number of academic boards have created their own 'quality committees', some quality assurance functions previously performed by academic boards are now being handled through management structures. Perhaps the time has come to consider an expertise criterion for membership of academic boards, or to ask whether quality assurance functions are better handled through other means.

In Australia as elsewhere, complex internal dynamics shape the actual role played by the academic board. The extent to which the board is actively involved in policy advice depends in part on the level of trust between the board and the chief executive and senior managers, as well as the extent to which academic leaders participate on

the board. Some Australian universities are using good practices noted in the CHEMS study of interactions between councils and academic boards, such as increasing the flow of information, allowing observers from the other body, and occasional joint meetings. Perhaps the focus of any interplay between these two major governance committees should be a joint assessment of the options for the future role of the academic board.

Conclusion

Councils and academic boards are both governance committees but the responsibilities and authority of each are clearly different, so it should not be assumed that they should have similar structures, modes of operation or priorities for improvement. On the other hand, it is fair to ask of any committee whether its roles and responsibilities are clear and effectively discharged.

Good governance is reassuring—it inspires confidence in external stakeholders, assists employees to focus on improvements and, ideally, when crises occur, allows a practised response. Yet good governance is dependent on continuous reinvention. Such reinvention is nowhere more evident than in those governance processes that involve committees or boards that are subject to frequent replacement of membership. If board members are to be effective from the outset, they should be able to benchmark their own board's performance against external reference points, to readily identify good practices and areas for improvement.

The analysis of AUQA audit reports indicates that academic boards appear to be facing more challenges in this respect than university governing bodies. If this is the case, however, there are implications also for governing bodies. The overall conclusion is that governing bodies would do well to monitor the extent to which they are supported by an active and effective academic board working productively in concert with executive managers.

For university governing boards in Australia, there is no lack of external reference points to encourage good practice. Firstly, there is a 'fixed point' and compliance-oriented reference in the form of the National Governance Protocols. The second external reference point comes in the form of reports by State and Territory auditors-general. A third reference point is made up, loosely, of a series of conversations, conferences, professional development activities, overseas study tours and related examples of the growing professionalization of Australian university governing bodies (Baird, 2006).

For academic board members, there are far fewer external reference points to assist in the transfer of good practice. Even though universities are heavily dependent on academic boards for quality assurance in the core areas of teaching and research—on paper, at least—discussion of the roles of academic boards is not widespread. This state of affairs is the more surprising if we accept that academic boards have a continuing role in ensuring the health of the quality conventions that make the whole enterprise of learning and discovery work—verifiable valid research and expert peer review, open processes of inquiry and public debate, and scholarly integrity. The time

is now ripe for a broadly based conversation about the continuing rationale for academic boards and ways of improving their operations for good institutional governance.

Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and should not be taken necessarily as a reflection of the views of the Australian Universities Quality Agency.

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