5.3 Quality Assurance Framework

1. Purpose

This Quality Assurance Framework articulates Acknowledge Education Pty Ltd (AE) unique approach to safeguarding and continuously enhancing academic quality. It is designed to meet and exceed the expectations of Domain 5 of the HESF 2021 while integrating seamlessly with AE's established governance structures as outlined in the Governance Framework.

- **Regulatory and strategic alignment:** Ensure that all academic assurance activities fully comply with HESF 2021 requirements and support AE's strategic objectives.
- **Continuous improvement:** Establish a culture of ongoing quality enhancement through systematic planning, data-driven monitoring, and proactive benchmarking against industry standards.
- **Transparent accountability:** Define clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting channels, from the Board of Directors (the Board) to the Academic Board and Executive Management, to ensure rigorous oversight and timely decision-making.
- **Institutional distinctiveness:** Reflect AE's commitment to academic excellence, integrity, and innovative practices that are unique to its operating environment.

1.1 Strategic objectives

- **Enhance academic quality and integrity:** Guarantee that every academic program and research initiative is regularly reviewed, benchmarked, and improved.
- **Embed best practices:** Integrate leading practices from top Australian universities and global higher education providers into AE's assurance processes.
- **Strengthen governance and oversight:** Utilise AE's established governance framework to support strategic decision-making, robust risk management, and compliance.
- **Empower stakeholder engagement:** Involve academic staff, students, industry partners, and regulatory bodies in feedback loops that drive continuous improvement.

- **Leverage data and analytics:** Employ comprehensive data collection and analysis to inform quality assurance, facilitate benchmarking, and guide resource allocation.

2. Scope and applicability

This framework encompasses the full range of academic assurance activities across AE, including:

- **Academic governance:** Oversight by the Board, the Academic Board, and delegated executive management members.
- **Teaching and learning:** Quality assurance for course design, delivery and assessment.
- **Student support and engagement:** Mechanisms to monitor student progress, gather feedback, and ensure equitable access to academic support.
- **External partnerships and accreditation:** Engagement with external bodies to validate quality, align with professional standards, and benchmark performance.
- **Operational procedures:** Detailed processes and procedural guidance for implementing, monitoring, and continuously improving quality assurance practices.

3. Alignment with HESF 2021 Domain 5 and AE Governance Framework

AE's Quality Assurance Framework has been developed with a dual focus:

- **HESF 2021 Domain 5:** Ensuring that academic programs adhere to national standards for quality, continuous improvement, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Governance integration:** Reflecting the roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures defined in the AE Governance Framework. In particular, the framework builds on:
    - **Delegated authority:** The Academic Board's authority (granted by the Board) to oversee academic quality, policies, and procedures.
    - **Risk and compliance oversight:** The integration of risk management practices via the Risk and Compliance Committee (RCC).
    - **Transparent reporting:** Regular and structured reporting from the Academic Board and RCC to the Board ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

4. Detailed processes and procedural framework

4.1 Operational Processes

AE has defined robust, detailed processes to ensure every aspect of academic quality is addressed:

- **Curriculum and program design**
    - **Review cycles:** Implement regular internal and external reviews of course design, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies.
    - **Documentation:** Maintain comprehensive revision histories and approval records to ensure transparency and traceability.
- **Teaching and learning**
    - **Standardisation and training:** Adopt standardised teaching protocols where relevant and continuous professional development.
    - **Digital analytics:** Use digital learning management systems to collect data on teaching effectiveness and student engagement.
- **Student support services:**
    - **Lifecycle integration:** Embed academic support, orientation, and support services throughout the student lifecycle.
    - **Student feedback:** Use student surveys, focus groups, and performance data to drive timely interventions and remedial actions.
- **External engagement and accreditation:**
    - **Partnership protocols:** Establish structured consultation processes with industry bodies, accreditation agencies, and relevant external stakeholders.
    - **Benchmarking:** Compare performance data against external standards to ensure competitiveness, compliance and models of best practice.

4.2 Implementation, oversight, and risk management

The framework leverages AE's governance structure to ensure effective oversight as follows:

- **Governance structures**
    - **Board of Directors:** Holds ultimate responsibility for strategic direction, risk management, and compliance.

- **Academic Board:** Acts as the principal academic governing body responsible for setting and monitoring academic quality standards, with authority delegated by the Board.
- **CEO and Executive Management:** Implement policies and oversee day-to-day operations, reporting progress of key metrics to the Academic Board and, in turn, to the Board.
- **Risk management and compliance:**
- **Regular audits:** Internal audits, external accreditation reviews, and risk assessments ensure compliance with HESF 2021 and other regulatory frameworks.
- **Risk register:** Maintain an up-to-date risk register and implement proactive risk mitigation strategies as guided by the RCC.

- **Reporting and accountability:**
  - **Scheduled reporting:**
    - The Chair of the Academic Board, or delegate, to provide detailed reports at meetings of the Board, including institutional metrics and benchmarking data that is used as lead indicator to AE's risk rating under TEQSA's Risk Assessment Framework (RAF).
    - The Chair of the RCC, or delegate, to provide detailed reports at meetings of the Board of key risks to the organisation.
  - **Board briefings:** Regular reports to the Board on relevant finance and operational matters to ensure that governance bodies are informed and engaged in decision-making.

5. The continuous improvement cycle: Plan, Do, Review, Improve (PDRI)

Central to AE's Quality Assurance Framework is the iterative PDRI cycle, ensuring that quality assurance practices remain dynamic and responsive:

- **Plan**
  - **Strategic planning:** Develop quality assurance plans aligned with HESF 2021 and AE's strategic priorities.
  - **KPI establishment:** Define clear, measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) in the following areas of attrition, progression and completion.

- **Resource allocation:** Ensure adequate training, technology, and staffing resources to support quality initiatives.

- **Do**
  - **Implementation:** Execute quality assurance initiatives across all academic domains.
  - **Stakeholder engagement:** Involve academic staff, students, and external stakeholders through Course Advisory and Review Committee (CARC) meetings, seminars, and consultation sessions.
- **Review**
  - **Data collection and analysis:** Collate data on academic performance, student satisfaction, and operational efficiency.
  - **Benchmarking:** Compare AE's performance against internal and external benchmarks to identify trends and gaps.
  - **Feedback integration:** Gather and analyse feedback from internal audits, student and staff surveys, and external accreditation reviews.
- **Improve**
  - **Actionable insights:** Develop targeted improvement initiatives based on review outcomes, with clear timelines and accountability.
  - **Iterative refinement:** Update policies, procedures, and operational practices continuously to respond to emerging trends and feedback.
  - **Transparent reporting:** Document and report improvement actions to either the Board or Academic Board, ensuring ongoing oversight and accountability.

6. Data Collection, Analysis, and Benchmarking

Robust data management and integrity is essential to ensuring compliance with this framework.

- **Data collection systems:**
  - **Systems:** In conjunction with internal systems, such as AE's student management system (SMS) and learning management system (LMS), and external systems such as PRISMS and TCSI, AE will capture data to inform governance bodies of key performance metrics and risks.
  - **Surveys:** AE will collate at the end of each study period student feedback through formalised student surveys that are largely aligned

to survey fields within the government's Quality Indications of Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys.

    - **Continuous monitoring:** Ensure data is collected on an ongoing basis to facilitate accurate reporting against agreed KPIs.

- **Data analysis and interpretation:**

    - **Comprehensive metrics:** Analyse both numerical data (e.g., attrition, completion rates, grade distributions) and qualitative feedback (e.g., satisfaction surveys, peer reviews).

    - **Predictive analytics:** Use internal and external data to forecast trends and identify potential challenges, enabling proactive quality interventions.

- **Benchmarking:**

    - **Internal benchmarking:** Compare current performance against historical data to track progress over time.

    - **External benchmarking:** Regularly benchmark against other higher education providers to identify both trends and gaps that can be addressed by AE.

    - **Reporting:** Include benchmarking results as a key component of annual and interim quality assurance reports to AE's governing bodies.

7. Governance, Oversight, and Reporting Mechanisms

7.1 Academic Governance

AE's governance framework ensures that quality assurance is embedded at every level of the organisation.

- **Board of Directors**

    - Sets the overall strategic direction and ensures compliance with HESF 2021 and other regulatory frameworks.

    - Delegates authority for academic governance to the Academic Board.

- **Academic Board**
    - Provides independent oversight of academic quality and standards.
    - Reviews academic policies, course development, research practices, and student outcomes.
    - Reports regularly to the Board and ensures that its findings, including those from Course Advisory and Review Committees (CARCs) and the Student Progress Committee (SPC), are actioned.
- **Risk and Compliance Committee**
    - The RCC is responsible for assisting the Board in establishing and maintaining effective compliance.
    - Monitor and review AE's performance against the higher education risk framework, proposing corrective actions where required.
    - Reports regularly to the Board and ensures that its findings are actioned.
- **CEO and Executive Management:**
    - Implement policies and manage day-to-day operations in accordance with established governance structures.
    - Ensure that quality assurance initiatives are executed effectively and report outcomes back to the Academic Board.

7.2 Reporting to the Board

- **Annual reports**
    - Includes detailed analyses of academic performance, audit outcomes, benchmarking comparisons, risk assessments, and progress on strategic initiatives.
- **Formal board meetings**
    - The Academic Board, RCC and the CEO present regular briefings to the Board of Directors, ensuring that governance bodies have the information they need to make informed decisions.
    - Provide reports on key quality assurance metrics and risk management actions.

8. Best practice integration

- **Adoption of proven models**
    - Leverage proven models adopted by other higher education providers, including those within the UP Education Group.
- **Collaborative networks:**
    - Participate in higher education industry association forums to continuously update and refine AE's adoption of best practices.
- **Risk management and compliance:**
    - Integrate comprehensive risk management and compliance protocols into all aspects of quality assurance, ensuring alignment with AE's Governance Framework and HESF 2021.

9. Commitment to Continuous Improvement and Institutional Excellence

- **Professional development**
    - Offer ongoing training and development opportunities to academic and administrative staff to enhance quality assurance capabilities.
- **Feedback driven innovation**
    - Regularly conduct forums, workshops, and surveys to capture feedback from both staff and students to drive iterative improvements across AE.
- **Future ready strategies**
    - Continuously monitor both national and global trends and emerging best practices to ensure that AE's quality assurance framework remains innovative and responsive.

10. Conclusion

This comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework, which has been developed to align with Domain 5 of the HESF 2021 and integrated with AE's Governance Framework, provides a robust foundation for academic quality and operational excellence. By establishing detailed processes, leveraging advanced data analytics, and ensuring transparent oversight through well-defined governance channels, AE is uniquely positioned to deliver outstanding academic outcomes while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

11.0 Policy Information

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Responsibilities:	Board of Directors, Academic Board, Executive Management
Contact:	regulatorcompliance@ae.edu.au 03 9663 3399

12. Change Log

Date	Version	By	Notes
15/11/2023	1.0	Narelle Whatley	Full policy review and rewrite
18/03/2025	1.1	Matthew Farago	Scheduled policy review - Provided clarity regarding Alignment with HESF 2021 Domain 5 and AE Governance Framework - Revised benchmarking section - Reformatted layout to be consistent with other policies