Introduction

Avondale submitted a Performance Portfolio to the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in July 2008. This Portfolio was structured around the four Quality Audit Factors published in the Department of Education Science and Training Manual (now DEEWR). Subsequently Avondale’s first audit visit was conducted in October 2008. The final AUQA report was published on the AUQA website in 17 February 2009.

The AUQA Audit Report included 5 affirmations and 12 recommendations, none of which were designated urgent. This progress report highlights actions taken in response to the AUQA audit report over the past two years. The Quality Committee, a subcommittee of Academic Board, oversees the quality management system, the continuous improvement process, and the responses outlined in this report. This report describes the progress Avondale has made toward addressing each of the affirmations and recommendations in the two year timeframe since the report was published. Where necessary the report also lists the plans in place for completing the responses in the three years until the next scheduled audit.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms Avondale College’s recognition of the need to further develop its integrated strategic planning model.

In response to this affirmation, Avondale has revised its Vision, Mission, Values, and Graduate Attributes. In further developing its integrated strategic planning model this was undertaken in two phases. First Avondale added KPIs to its current Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and is currently developing a new Strategic Plan 2012-2016 with associated strategic and operational plans.

The Vision of the institution has been revised to state: Avondale’s vision is to be the preferred Christian private university in Australia

The Mission of the institution has been revised so that it now states: Avondale’s mission is to foster a Christian learning community that is founded on quality research-based higher education and that prepares students for lives of service

The Values of the institution have been revised so that they now state:

Excellence: Avondale accepts the challenge of learning and discovery, of striving for excellence, and of fostering creativity that blends individuality, wisdom and healthy self-evaluation. It promotes excellence in the higher education it offers, in the quality of the infrastructure it develops, and in the spiritual and academic support services it provides.

Spirituality: Avondale values spirituality and believes that nothing is of greater significance than each person’s relationship to God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Avondale invites all its staff and students to respond positively to God’s invitation to commune with Him in prayer, worship, meditation, fellowship, study of the Bible, and Sabbath rest.

Nurture: Avondale seeks to encourage members of its learning community to realise their full potential, and to live full and joyful lives. In achieving this goal Avondale enhances social skills, values friendships and supports family relationships. It seeks to provide the guidance and nurture that will enable its students to respond intelligently to their own needs and to the needs of others.
Service: Avondale’s motto, “For a Greater Vision of World Needs”, challenges its learning community to a more informed understanding of humanitarian needs and responses, and to a greater commitment to fulfilling the needs of those less fortunate and in want of human care and support both in Australia and overseas.

Balance: Avondale values the sustainability of the earth and its peoples and believes that this can be achieved through balance. Learning to live a balanced life is based on living temperately and Avondale encourages this by providing a balanced program of spiritual growth, intellectual development, cultural enrichment, physical activity, relaxation and recreation. This program sustains Avondale’s human resources. A balanced approach to budgeting and infrastructure management sustains Avondale’s physical resources and the environment.

The Graduate Attributes of the institution for coursework degrees have been revised to state that Avondale’s objective is that its graduates:

1. Are equipped to reflect creatively on the interface between Adventist Christian values and home, workplace, and community
2. Possess high ethical standards including an orientation to service
3. Are committed to human and environmental sustainability
4. Possess excellent and relevant professional employability skills
5. Enjoy a sense of individual worth
6. Lead confidently in their communities and workplaces
7. Possess relevant technology skills
8. Possess scholarly qualities and enthusiasm for their future lives and learning
9. Understand and respect cultural differences in people
10. Transfer their acquired knowledge to a variety of contexts

In addition, Avondale’s objective is that its graduates from research higher degrees are:

1. Autonomous researchers
2. In command of a new subset of specialised knowledge
3. Passionate about the discovery and advancement of knowledge
4. Reflective and critical thinkers
5. Insightful in the use and usefulness of research processes and research outcomes for society, the workplace and education
6. Able to theorise, analyse and research a problem
7. Able to communicate research outcomes in written and verbal forms adapted to suit different target audiences
8. Learners in orientation and attitude
9. Literate in relevant research information technology
10. Active participants in a community of scholars.

The Strategic Plan in place at the time of the AUQA audit spanned the years 2008-2012. Following the audit in Phase I of the continued integration of the Strategic Plan, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were added to the Plan, and reporting to Council against the KPIs commenced on a regular basis.

During Phase II of the integration process, a consultant was employed to lead the strategic planning process with the Executive Team. The process included identifying the current internal and external drivers for the institution, the future goals, and the strategies by which the goals could be achieved. The outcome of this process was a working document which was subsequently discussed with the middle managers and the Council. The draft Strategic Plan 2012-2016 is currently under development and it is intended that when this plan has been completed and approved, it will also include basic projections extending to 2020.

The associated Business Plan, Learning and Teaching Plan, Research Plan, Quality Plan and various other plans will be revised to integrate with the revised Strategic Plan. Faculty Strategic Plans will be revised to be consistent with the new Integrated Strategic Plan. The revised Vision, Mission, Values,
Graduate Attributes have already been utilised in curriculum mapping, unit outlines, accreditation documents and scholarship applications. In conclusion, while we have not yet completed our revised integrated strategic plan, we have actively been working on the foundations of this plan and it is anticipated that the new revised plan will be in place well prior to 2012.

**Affirmation 2**

AUQA affirms the need for Avondale College to further develop the annual review of achievements, the key performance indicators and annual targets of the integrated strategic plan.

The annual review of achievements in relation to the strategic plan (with KPIs) and the various operational plans is undertaken by Executive Committee. Reports to Council on the strategic plan against the KPIs are made by each member of the Executive team on a regular basis (normally twice per annum) and recorded in the Council minutes. The Chair of the Academic Board has developed an annual reporting calendar which includes a report from the Academic IT Committee, a review of strategic planning from the Innovations Committee, reports from Faculties and the Library, progress and retention report by the Registrar, and reports from the Learning and Teaching Committee and Research Committee. The Annual Report is reviewed by Academic Board in April prior to its submission to the NSW Department of Education and Training in May.

The Vice-President (Learning and Teaching) reviews all student evaluations of teaching and provides a summary to each staff member. The data from these evaluations are considered by the staff member and Dean of Faculty in the Performance Reviews of academic staff. Some staff use the outcomes from these evaluations when submitting applications for Learning and Teaching Awards, normally presented in October each year.

**Affirmation 3**

AUQA affirms the intention of Avondale College to rationalise the number of faculties, courses and programs.

In responding to this affirmation, Avondale’s initial step was to engage an experienced consultant (a Head of School and Associate Professor from the University of Newcastle) to undertake a review of faculties, structures, courses and their viability. A lengthy report was provided to the Avondale College Council and administrators which included 61 recommendations and commenced with the following Executive Summary: “This report, commissioned by the College Council, looks into the College’s structures, curricula and teaching activities as well as the systems which support the delivery of the courses and units of the College. The author would like to thank the administration and the staff of the college for the support and enthusiasm shown in this process. During the interviews and focus groups conducted at the College, the staff showed themselves to be most supportive and willing to share their concerns and aspirations, as well as to provide descriptions of opportunities which were evident to them. They also provided context to the issues which they identified. This was invaluable.

“The College sees itself at the crossroads with opportunities and threats providing a situation where change is necessary. The tertiary sector in Australia is in a hiatus with government support of universities remaining static and the sector trying to move forward in a restrictive financial climate. Other issues occurring in Australia are the proliferation of private tertiary education institutions of varying quality which is providing the sector with a poor reputation. Unfortunately because of its ‘College’ status, Avondale finds itself in a marketplace which is proving difficult. Also, the Federal Government is projecting a period of growth.

“What is evident is that the potential of the College, and the quality and enthusiasm of the staff has created an environment which is probably the most supportive of students in Australia. Students are genuinely happy to be at the College and they receive excellent support through a very low staff/student ratio. The College is moving to enhance its research profile with the purpose of enhancing its opportunity to become a University College. The College does have considerable potential to undertake research and scholarly activities, but in a very limited domain.”
The report which followed was divided into the following sections, with the 61 recommendations spread throughout the report: (a) Academic Board, its role in organisational governance, functions, membership, communication of responsibilities and decisions, and committees of Academic Board; (b) Avondale academic structures and rationalisation of units and courses; (c) growth potential; (d) teaching and learning at the College; and (d) potential areas for improvement.

The 61 recommendations subsequently were integrated into the overall planning process which also contains the recommendations from the AUQA report, the criteria of the National Protocols, the IT review and various other recommendations. Once the recommendations were prioritised, the implementation process commenced and is currently part-way through.

Just as in the AUQA Report, some of the recommendations in the academic review related to the need to rationalise the faculty structure. To date, Avondale has reduced from seven faculties to four faculties. The four remaining faculties are the Faculty of Arts and Theology, the Faculty of Education and Science, the Faculty of Nursing and Health, and the Faculty of Business. It is our intention to finalise this restructure so that the final three faculties will also reflect the three main discipline areas relating to Avondale’s learning, teaching and research.

In addition, a limited number of courses has been discontinued over the past two years e.g., the Postgraduate Diploma of Nursing, the Master of Nursing (Research), and the Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Science. More streamlining will follow in 2011. Any new courses that came on line in 2010 were related to Avondale’s increased focus on research higher degrees and the consolidation and integration of key research areas. Although a number of academic staff redundancies have occurred in this restructure process, most staff have responded positively to the changes.

Rationalisation at the unit level has also occurred over the past two years. Some undergraduate courses have established a more substantive set of core units, thus allowing a greater proportion of students to pursue a common pattern of study. Thus the number of elective units offered within these courses has been able to be reduced.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms Avondale’s proactive management of the tensions in seeking to develop a research culture which underpins teaching and learning.

As stated above, Avondale is aligning its academic structures with the targeted research areas which in turn are aligned with its key teaching areas. Substantial progress has been made since the AUQA audit in 2008 on the development of the research culture and associated research-teaching nexus. One innovative event that occurred late in 2010 was a conference in which undergraduate students were invited to present papers on Critical Issues for the 21st Century. This conference was a key step in assisting high achieving students in becoming aware of the possibilities of a research career. Publishable papers also resulted.

An academic staff workload formula has been developed which includes an average of 300-400 hours for research. Some block times for research have been identified for all academic staff in 2011. Those academic staff who decide not to utilise this time for research are able to assist other staff with marking or other tasks, thereby lightening the load particularly for those staff willing to and able to accept a higher proportion of research in their load.

Over the past two years, a strong research culture has developed so that it includes:

- research days held in faculties and institution-wide;
- specialist staff employed for research purposes;
- internal funding available for research and support available for external funding grants;
- research leave (formerly sabbatical leave) available;
- external and internal guest speaker presentations at regular weekly colloquia;
- three Avondale-produced journals with Avondale editors;
• a rationalisation of research centres is underway so that increased focus can be on fewer centres, while simultaneous planning for the future development of research centres is under consideration;
• establishment of an institutional research repository which makes available Avondale’s research output via ResearchOnline@Avondale (http://research.avondale.edu.au);
• establishment of a Scholars’ Centre in which research higher degree students are allocated individual carrels and visiting scholars can find a place to work on collaborative projects;
• a suite of research higher degrees is now available with three research masters degrees in theology, education and arts and the Doctor of Philosophy. Two undergraduate honours degrees are available in education and theology;
• research on teaching innovations has increased, particularly during 2010. This will continue in 2011 and beyond and is led by Dr Maria Northcote;
• one academic conference was hosted at Avondale in 2009 and others will follow;
• collaborative research projects are funded by and undertaken in collaboration with industry (e.g., Lake Macquarie Council, Sanitarium);
• Research supervisor training is ongoing and related to the needs of the current supervisors.

This strong research culture shows that: (a) staff are research active, publishing, able to supervise students, and able to apply for contestable funding; and (b) both undergraduate and postgraduate students are enrolling in and contributing to an institution that is research savvy, active and aware.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms Avondale College’s implementation of the 360 degree feedback processes with administrative and managerial staff and encourages the College to implement this process across the institution.

The Enterprise Agreement signed on 1 July 2010 included the requirement to have a Performance Review and Planning Process integrated with the Strategic Plan and other documents such as the promotion policy, and the generic job descriptions for academic and general staff. The existing Performance Review policy and documents were appropriate but the revisions will result in an Integrated Performance Management System so that staff can be assured that their work relates to the strategic directions of the institution, and will contribute to fulfilling criteria needed for promotion. An inclusion of the 360 degree process will be implemented for academic staff and heads of AOU’s.

Recommendation 1

AUQA recommends that as Avondale develops in size and complexity, consideration be given to the relationships between the role of Council and the CEO and senior staff in terms of governance and management.

Avondale continues to give consideration to the relationships and relative responsibilities of the Council, the CEO, senior administrators, and senior staff. Some revisions have been made to the Constitution during 2010 and an extract from the Constitution has been developed into a more “user-friendly” Terms of Reference for Council. In addition, Terms of Reference have been developed for the Executive Committee. These documents clearly distinguish between responsibilities of governance and management.

The CEO and Executive Committee members provide regular written reports to Council in regard to strategic and operational matters. In addition, the Executive Committee has formalised a process whereby AOU’s and senior staff report to, and interact with, the committee on a regular rotating basis.

The Council members’ induction into the responsibilities of directors, conducted by the chair and the secretary, includes a section on the distinction between governance and management. Council members complete an annual self-review of Council operations and issues raised in this process relative to governance/management have been actioned.
Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that Avondale College review the terms of reference and activities of the Academic Board to ensure that there is clear responsibility for leadership in, and effective management of, academic policy.

AUQA has cited Avondale’s academic structure as an example of appropriate practice in its documents. However, since the time of the AUQA report Avondale has reviewed the Terms of Reference for Academic Board through an extensive process, including benchmarking against the Terms of Reference for Academic Boards/Senates of several Australian universities. This was undertaken by the Chair of Academic Board, ad hoc subcommittees of the Board, discussion in monthly meetings of Academic Board throughout 2010 and in consultation with members of the administration of Avondale College. The Terms of Reference clearly define the delegation by the College Council of responsibility to Academic Board for the planning, development and operation of all academic programs. The Terms of Reference also establish an Executive Committee of the Academic Board, and more clearly delineate the subcommittees of the Board and their lines of reporting (Academic Structure). The changes introduced have enabled the Board to function in a more strategic and efficient fashion. The Chair of the Academic Board reports to Council at each meeting; a survey instrument similar to that used for Council member’s evaluation has been developed and will be used in 2011; and Avondale’s Academic Board membership also now includes a senior researcher and academic from an Australian university.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that Avondale College seek to enhance the services available to off-campus students, including student support and social services.

Avondale’s AUQA report commended the College’s holistic approach to education and the respect and affection which students, staff and community hold for the “Avondale experience”. Commendation was also given to Avondale College for its attention to the needs of individual students, the availability of alternative pathways and support for students, and low student staff ratios. In this context, it was recommended that Avondale needed to proactively include off campus students in events and activities that encourage interaction and relationship-building within the College community. However, despite this commendation, and in response to Recommendation 3, Avondale actively undertook a review of student services across both its campuses.

Review of Student Services and Facilities: In response to student requests a review of facilities and services available on each campus was undertaken in consultation with students and staff. The review identified some areas where facilities and services differed between the two campuses, though there was not one site that was disadvantaged overall and some differences related to campus locations in either regional or city locations. It also identified a growing proportion of students living off-campus.

Recommendations have been adopted in relation to the role of student services staff on each campus, improving access to IT facilities after hours for off-campus students, improving IT infrastructure at the Sydney Campus with enhanced off-site on-line access and services, enhancing student interaction between the two campuses and improving communication regarding activities for students. Further, the role of the Avondale Nursing Student Association has been revised with extended involvement in planning and support of student events.

Following on from this review Avondale has proactively enhanced the services available to off-campus students in the following ways.

Academic support: Off-campus students are able to access the tutoring service available at the Library as a central point, as well as assistance with listening, comprehension and speaking skills in
English Language Proficiency on either campus. In addition, the smaller class sizes result in greater access to their lecturers.

**Facilities:** Lighting has been erected on the oval for use at night for activities such as touch football and soccer. A “Fit-Life Health Gymnasium” has been established which includes facilities for swimming. The Gym is available to both on-campus and off-campus students and their friends from the community from 6am - 9pm. A new large screen TV has been installed in the student common area which is available to both on-campus and off-campus students. There has also been improved service in the provision of cafe food choices and facilities.

**Communication of Events:** Communication of social events now takes place through Facebook, plasma screens in key positions on the campus, and SMS messaging.

**Activities:** A student vs staff sports program has been implemented with good success. High-profile visiting speakers have been engaged for the weekly forum event to which all students are invited and most attend. In addition, interactive faculty-based forums have also taken place.

**Planned improvements:** A BBQ area is to be located in the married student’s accommodation precinct. A feasibility study will be conducted to investigate the provision of a children’s playground for the children of married students. It is proposed to be located in close proximity to the married students’ accommodation area.

A computer laboratory is now available on the Lake Macquarie Campus from 5.00 am to 12 midnight to provide printing services for all students during non-Library hours. This facility specifically allows off-campus students to print assignments and course requirements for early morning classes.

**Spiritual:** support for off-campus students is available in the form of (a) Personality Type counselling; (b) specially designed worship experiences for youth-age students which are well attended by off-campus students as well as those living on the campus. These student-led services with an associated cafe, are an important tool to help the off campus students build personal relationships with those living on the campus. A second cafe provides a place for off campus students to be comfortable, have opportunity to study and converse with other students, as well as access internet facilities in a coffee shop atmosphere.

**Counselling support:** Avondale undertook a benchmarking exercise with Australian universities in relation to the number of counselling hours per student and found Avondale’s practice (23 hours for 1300 students) well in excess of the benchmark (15 hours per 3,000 students). When the longstanding counsellor retired in 2008 a counsellor was appointed who was able to provide careers counselling as well as personal counselling. In addition, two interns are undertaking their work experience on campus under the supervision of the Counsellor and consequently students have a choice of persons with whom to make appointments.

**Other support:** Off-campus students also have access on both campuses to disability liaison services, careers and employment services, chaplaincy services, international student services, student financial aid services, student housing services and transition services. The speed and access of the internet connection between the two campuses has been upgraded and there has been improvement in the wireless connectivity across campus. Moodle support is also available and the computer labs on the Lake Macquarie campus include printing, copying, and scanning services.

**Medical Services:** Medical Services in the Lake Macquarie area have increased so that a bulk billing surgery is now operational in Morisset and a bus operates frequently between the College and Morisset. Morisset is also the recipient of one of the new GP Superclinics and this has recently been opened toward the end of 2010. Therefore, it has not been necessary to employ a health professional on the Campus as was anticipated at the time of the AUQA visit.
Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that Avondale College further adopt innovative practices to teaching and learning including the use of technologies.

To oversee Information Technology and Communication (ITC) learning support needs for academics and students Avondale developed a new committee structure consisting of an Innovations Committee which examines pedagogical issues relation to teaching innovation, and an Academic IT Committee which aims to strengthen the linkage between the college academics and the institution’s IT Department. The college is also reviewing the use of technology (both ICT and audio-visual) through the Academic IT Committee. A campus-wide survey of classrooms and equipment has been undertaken and a position paper developed which presents best-practices from Australian universities as well as technology trends in audio-visual equipment and the usage thereof. This material is being used by the committee to identify opportunities to use the technology to improve teaching presentation and student interaction in classes. In addition, the ICT committee will undertake a new strategic development and alignment process to review the college’s use of ICT technology and ensure it’s alignment to the college’s strategic goals.

After initial research on current innovative practices and the investigation of examples of best practice in the use of teaching and learning innovations and technologies, and the requests of staff, a special projects person was employed at the beginning of 2010 to assist in the implementation of Moodle as a learning support tool with its associated professional development of staff presented in a series of modules. The modules were designed within the following six themes: (1) Getting started; (2) Active and interactive learning; (3) Assessment and evaluation; (4) Rich media; (5) Resources; and (6) Management. A paper entitled “Bumpy moments and joyful breakthroughs: The place of threshold concepts in academic staff development programs about online learning and teaching” presented by Maria Northcote, Peter Beamish, Daniel Reynaud, Tony Martin (all from Avondale) and Kevin Gosselin (University of Texas and author of the “Online Teaching Self-Efficacy Inventory”) outlined the innovative nature of Avondale’s approach and was presented to the 3rd Threshold Concepts Symposium at UNSW (1-2 July, 2010).

Finally, Avondale College employed an external consultant to review its current IT support levels including those for teaching and learning. This report is currently being finalised and will be presented to our Executive Committee in late February 2011. Based on the recommendations of this review, an IT support plan will be developed and integrated into the overall planning for the College. These recommendations are expected to include suggested changes to the IT structure and the development of the new policies, practices and processes.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the changes accepted by the Executive committee will commence early April 2011 and as part of this process a planning document will be developed which sets out a time line and responsibilities for the change.

In addition to the two processes above which are continuing, several individual innovations have been completed and/or recognised. Associate Professor Daniel Reynaud was awarded (2009) a citation by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council for his innovative ‘war-gaming’ strategy. A poetry volume was published in collaboration between Carolyn Rickett (Avondale) and Judith Beveridge, an eminent Australian poet, as an outcome of a creative writing class. Several outcomes have resulted in theology, communication and visual arts from a foundational model whereby real-world tasks are integrated with learning tasks. The graphic design studio which operates on campus is one example. Learning and Teaching awards for innovations are presented during Learning and Teaching week in October each year.

Further, Avondale began an international teaching program in 2007. While the benefits of pre-service teachers engaging in an overseas practicum have been widely researched and understood and consequently are being offered by a number of universities, a majority of such programs send their teachers to developed countries. At Avondale the focus has been on providing student teachers with international experiences in developing countries and in 2010 three experiences were organised giving Primary and Secondary pre-service teachers the opportunity to teach in Cambodia, India or Nepal. The goal is to provide international classroom experiences which result in students
understanding the concepts of the “global community” and “interconnectedness”, thus seeking to instil transformational thinking in their future students.

In another example, the International Poverty and Development program prioritises student interaction with the development sector. In order to allow students in one unit of this program to undertake research in an international fieldwork program, the School of Arts Humanities and Creative Arts has developed an MOU with an Non-Government Organisation (NGO). The NGO provides an annual $5,000 for students to research - for either publication or a consultancy report – a current problem. In 2010 students evaluated a tobacco advocacy project in Mongolia by interviewing different stakeholder groups using voice recording devices. In recognition of the need to deepen student’s exposure to development workers, Skype is used to video conference. The Unit IDPS33000 Development Skills familiarises students with satellite phones, GPS, voice recording devices, Skype, camera and other technologies used in the development sector.

Finally, at the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) (2010) a keynote speaker commented on how authentic learning principles are applied within higher education learning contexts. The keynote speaker described how she had seen examples of authentic learning in individual units but had not seen any examples applied across units and within courses in the university sector. However, Avondale applies these principles across units and within courses and programs. In this way, Avondale’s application of authentic learning principles could be considered as being innovative at an institutional level, not just at a unit level.

**Recommendation 5**

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College further systematically develop its student evaluation survey processes to ensure both students and staff are provided with regular feedback on outcomes.*

The Student Evaluation of Instruction Questionnaire (SEIQ) is administered at the conclusion of each semester for all units. Since 2008 the SEIQ has been revised and renamed Student Evaluation Questionnaire (SEQ). The process of collating data and returning these results back to staff and students has progressively become more systematic. This process is overseen by the Office of the Vice-President (Learning and Teaching). Academic staff members are able to discuss these data with the Dean or Head of School at the time of their annual Performance Review. SEQ feedback is also used for improving pedagogy and student service activities. [Additionally, the Vice-President (Learning and Teaching) has investigated several packages for undertaking the student evaluation questionnaire process electronically such as EvaSys.]

In addition to the required SEQ, Avondale staff use the (optional) framework for the regular evaluation of units. This tool (adapted with permission from Morgan, 2008) provides a way to evaluate a unit using multiple sources of data (from students, self-reflection, from colleagues and from benchmarking processes).

The process for communicating the collated results of the unit evaluations to staff includes the provision of key summary data and commentary in the Learning and Teaching section of the Avondale website and further commentary from the Vice-President (Learning and Teaching) in the college-wide weekly newsletter near the start of each new teaching period. Students are also advised that they can contact Deans within each faculty discipline if they require further clarification on unit-specific or course-specific evaluation.

The process for communicating the collated results of the unit evaluations to staff includes the provision of feedback to each academic staff member summarising self-evaluation and student evaluation data from their unit/s. The Vice-President (Learning and Teaching) responds to this data by writing a letter to each member of the teaching staff. Additionally staff are able to access discipline-specific data via presentation at their respective Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and College-wide data and commentary relating to all units is shared with all academic staff as part of a professional development program in February each year.
Recommendation 6

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College in consultation with staff, clarify its approaches to the development and enhancement of the research profile.*

Avondale has revised its promotion policy which now includes research only, and teaching-research tracks. The teaching only track, which was previously available through the workload policy, is currently being added to the promotion policy as a career pathway. The research-teaching nexus is more widely understood across the campus, a research-teaching seminar has been presented to staff, and a research-teaching nexus statement has been developed and included in the web-based policy repository. The statement includes the rationale for maintaining the research-teaching nexus which includes founding teaching in real-world applications; improving teaching by utilising evidence-based teaching; currency of the curriculum by including current and future trends in the discipline; building scholarly communities of academic staff and students both of which are involved in the community of research.

Four staff at Level D have been appointed. Following advertisement in the Higher Education Supplement, one Level D staff member was appointed in Education for the 2011 year having previously been employed at the University of Wollongong. Three internal staff applied for, and were promoted to Level D, two of whom are in Society and Culture (one in Theology and one in History), and one of whom is in Education. It is still the goal to appoint a Level E staff member in 2012. Also, one Senior Lecturer (Research) has been appointed. This is the first research only position appointed at Avondale.

The restructure of the faculties has contributed to cross-disciplinary discussions and to improved ways of working to reach targets. For example, each faculty has its own Research Committee which includes the Vice-President (Administration and Research). The new Moodle project person appointee has acted as a research mentor for other teaching-based research projects and staff are now more conscious of possibilities for producing research on their teaching and in building research hours into their workload instead of making it just additional to teaching.

Recommendation 7

*AUQA recommends that the College undertake regular independent staff surveys.*

Prior to the last AUQA report Avondale utilised the services of Best Practice Australia to conduct a staff morale survey. However, since Recommendation 7 was received, Dr Josephine Palermo from Deakin University’s Faculty of Psychology and the School of Organisational Culture was engaged to conduct a seminar on maintenance of staff morale and the ageing workforce and to administer an associated survey. Avondale is awaiting the final report.

Recommendation 8

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College makes gender balance an area for attention in all future senior appointments, committee membership, professional development activities and succession planning.*

*Gender Balance in Senior Appointments:* Avondale submits a report annually to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA). Each year Avondale has been certified as being compliant and in addition, in the 2010 report, the EOWA response stated, “In reading your report, we noted your organisation took action by recruiting women into the Faculties of Theology and Science and Mathematics, which are non-traditional areas for women. When you next report on your workplace program, due by 31 May 2011, we would be interested to learn about the progress you have made in relation to developing a new performance appraisal process and implementing a more
formal mentoring program for academic women. ... I also encourage you to look at the criteria for the EOWA Employer of Choice for Women citation and consider applying to be on the 2011 list.

However, rather than being complacent, Avondale acknowledges that much work remains to be done to see women fully acknowledged. For example, in the recent round of new positions resulting from the restructure of faculties and departments, only one position was filled by a woman. In addition, the number of men above Senior Lecturer level increased during the period, while the number of women at this level decreased. This was largely as a result of introducing the position of “Associate Professor”. All four Associate Professors subsequently appointed were male. However, a number of new appointments of women at Senior Lecturer occurred. All Faculty Deans and Heads of Schools are male except for one.

**Gender Balance in Committee Membership:** An analysis of committee membership indicates women are well represented in the decision-making committees which oversee the major programs of Avondale. However, because of the lower proportion of women in senior positions in both the academic and general staff categories, this situation results in some women carrying heavy committee workloads. For academic women this can restrict the time available for research and other scholarly activities. A woman chaired the Academic Board for 2009-10, and upon her appointment as a Head of School, was replaced with another woman, Dr Marion Shields. An academic external to Avondale has been appointed to Academic Board; also a woman.

**Gender Balance in Professional Development:** Applications for internal funding for the 2010-2011 period included 13 applications from males and 5 applications from women. Applications for advanced study in the same period included 8 applications from males and 6 from women.

**Gender Balance in Succession Planning:** Some of the AOU’s have in place a succession plan, however, this needs to be more widely spread across the campus in future.

**Plans for the Future:** In redressing some of these inequities, the Equity Officer continues to review all policies as they are scheduled for review, a report on the gender balance of all major committees has been completed, and the Equity Policy is being revised. The President has taken responsibility for drafting proposed recommendations coming out of the Equity Reviews. In addition, the goals for the 2011 year include: (a) to develop and implement a more formal mentoring program for academic women; (b) to apply for permission from the Anti Discrimination Board to include in advertisements the statement, “Women are encouraged to apply”; (c) to develop and implement an individualised Skills Development Program for departmental secretaries designed in collaboration with the supervisor and with regard to the staff member’s stated professional goals; (d) to develop an Equity Management Plan that will support and promote an environment of “Dignity and Respect for All” and which includes a revision of the Equity Officer Job Description, Equity Committee Terms of Reference and the Avondale Equity Policy. It is anticipated that this Equity Management Plan will more closely align the work of all three entities to achieve the goals and objectives set. In summary, Avondale does continue to give close attention to gender balance in academic and administrative appointments, composition of committee memberships, professional development initiatives and succession planning.

**Recommendation 9**

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College apply greater rigour in the implementation and monitoring of both the anti-bullying and harassment and grievance policies.*

Prior to the AUQA audit visit, Avondale had antibullying and harassment and grievance policies in place. Seminars on their use were conducted for all staff and students at induction and all were informed of the need for a safe working and studying environment. Posters were developed and revised regularly where Grievance Officers and/or their contact details changed. These posters continue to be located around the campuses. Training sessions also continue to be conducted for staff at annual retreats.
However, since the time of the AUQA recommendation, Avondale has conducted a review of the process for recording and storing grievance records and implemented a process for collating the outcomes of grievances and monitoring and analysing the overall data. A summary of non-identifying data is provided by Avondale administrators responsible for receiving grievance reports, namely the Academic Registrar, the Equity Officer, the Human Resources Officer, and Offices of the Vice-Presidents to the central repository where the Equity Officer is able to make a synthesised report of the outcomes. This synthesised report provides information for follow-up actions where necessary, particularly changes to policies.

Avondale continues to provide financial support for grievance officers to be trained and for the Equity Officer to attend the EOPHEA conference conducted biennially.

Recommendation 10

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College include in its future structure additional senior academic appointments to enhance teaching and research activities.*

As stated above, four staff at Level D have been appointed. Following advertisement for a Level D/E in the Higher Education Supplement, one Level D staff member was appointed in Education for the 2011 year having previously been appointed at the University of Wollongong. Three internal staff applied for, and were promoted to Level D using a process that included external academics from Australian universities.

Avondale’s three main teaching and research areas are Society and Culture, Education, Nursing and Health and these Level D appointments made since the AUQA audit visit have resulted in a situation where there are now two Level D academics in the Education discipline area, and two in Society and Culture. Avondale has not yet appointed a Level D academic in Nursing and Health and this remains a strategic goal, as does the appointment of a Level E staff member by the end of 2012. In addition a special appointment was made of a person from the University of Newcastle to assist with the strategic introduction of Moodle in the Education and Society and Culture areas.

Recommendation 11

*AUQA recommends that Avondale College formalise benchmarking activity across the institution and in line with the College’s aspirations, with other national and international Christian universities.*

Avondale has had a formal benchmarking agreement with one private provider in place since 2007 and much useful data has been shared as a result. In addition a formal benchmarking group has been developed with six private providers who offer education courses becoming members of the benchmarking group. This group meets about twice per year. Various fields have been identified for benchmarking and working groups have been formed, each of which will provide a report to the whole group.

Other benchmarking activities continue. These include desktop benchmarking of policies, processes, terms of reference, curricula, and other web-based documents. These desktop benchmarking processes are supported by comments from other private and public providers. The moderation of unit assessment continues on a rotational basis so that all units are moderated at least once on a five-year cycle. Course accreditation documents are required to include benchmarking of courses against those offered in the higher education sector and so all courses are benchmarked at that time. Two recent examples are the Master of Arts (Research) and the Doctor of Philosophy.
Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that further work be undertaken to integrate the QMS and Avondale integrated strategic planning model including reporting within the College and further work be undertaken to deploy the QMS across all areas of Avondale College.

Avondale continues to embed the Quality Management System across the institution. This task has been largely the responsibility of the Quality Committee and its members who are senior representatives from each AOU are also the internal auditors. In preparation for the advent of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), the Quality Management System has been updated so that the Quality Committee is now known as the Quality and Standards Committee and the Terms of Reference have been amended to include oversight of standards. Similarly the Quality Policy is now the Quality and Standards Policy and other related documents have been amended along these lines. The Quality and Standards Committee has continued its work of identifying non-compliances, gaps in operational policies, the need for updates to policies and procedures, and continuous improvement in policies, procedures and actions. Improvements recommended by the Quality and Standards Committee are made to the Academic Board in the first instance, but may be referred to the most appropriate person or group for action depending on the matter.

The Vision, Strategy and Organisation Subcommittee of Council met on several occasions until such time as five overarching strategic questions were identified. Following this, a “Round Table” of all Council members, some key stakeholders and some key senior staff was convened on 9 December 2009 and a report produced by this group clarified several of the ‘sticking points’ regarding future directions for the institution. Since that time, the Executive Committee has been developing the new revised Strategic Plan prior to integrating its operational plans including a new Quality and Standards Plan.

Summary

In conclusion, Avondale did not receive any urgent recommendations in its AUQA report of 2008. However, action has been taken to some degree on all recommendations although some recommendations are ahead of others in reaching their final completion. We thank AUQA for the opportunity to highlight our progress to date.