

**Paper for the *Educators and Planners: Symphony or Discord* Conference  
AAIR Conference 1 - 3 December 1999**

**UNIVERSITY AND FACULTY STRATEGIC PLANNING -  
LINKING THE TWO VIA ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

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**ABSTRACT**

Strategic planning at the University of Wollongong consists of several tiers:

- University-wide planning
- Faculty planning
- Business Plans (for administrative and service centres)

The University needed to ensure a strong linkage between each of these tiers, emphasising not only long term targets for the University (e.g. in terms of enrolments and student mix), but also the quality of teaching and learning and the support of students and staff in this endeavour.

This paper will present an outline of how Wollongong is linking university and faculty planning through the development of an Academic Performance Report for each faculty, which brings together information from numerous sources (e.g. student and staff databases, satisfaction surveys, market research, strategic goals) to assist faculties in both management and long term strategic planning. Faculty input in the final stages of the report contributes to Rolling Five Year Academic Plans.

The paper will move through the process of:

- identifying indicators/information to include in the report (market analysis, enrolments, teaching and learning, student performance and satisfaction, research, internationalisation, resource management (funding, staffing, equipment)).
- faculty input
- reporting outcomes (uses are not solely related to the faculty, but also assist in the preparation of various government reports, marketing publications and strategies, action plans, faculty/departmental reviews, etc.).

# **UNIVERSITY AND FACULTY STRATEGIC PLANNING - LINKING THE TWO VIA ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Universities are increasingly being asked to account for their performance both quantitatively and qualitatively. This not only increases pressure on administrative units, but also on academics who are being asked to take on more "administrative tasks" in providing responses to administrative units (for annual management/planning tasks and reporting to, for example, DETYA). Our aim was to see if the process could be streamlined so that faculties provide feedback and report only once or twice a year, and which would be beneficial to both the faculty as well as the administrative units.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1992 the University of Wollongong developed its "Towards 2000" Strategic Plan. This document identified several key areas for each unit and faculty within the University to address, namely:

- teaching and learning
- research
- internationalisation
- resourcing

Each of these sub-headings included specific objectives, strategies and performance indicators. Later, Strategic Plan Progress Reports also included performance measurement against the indicators. These indicators formed part of a basis for the current Academic Performance Report.

In addition to the University Strategic Plan, faculties also produced three year Faculty Education Plans. (These three year plans have now been rolled into the Academic Performance Report structure as Five Year Rolling Plans.)

In 1997, the University's Strategic Plan was updated and overhauled in format. The current Plan currently provides top level information only (i.e. university mission, objectives, strategies and overall faculty goals in terms of students numbers, mix, and proportional financial sources). It is internal documents such as the Academic Performance Report and Unit Business Plans that provide the detail for unit and faculty level strategic planning, within the overall framework set by the University Strategic Plan. Thus, strategic planning at the University of Wollongong consists of several tiers:

- University-wide planning (the University Strategic Plan)
- Faculty planning (Academic Performance Reports/Five Year Rolling Plans)
- Business Plans (administrative and service centres)

The University needs to ensure a strong linkage between each of these tiers, emphasising not only long term targets for the University (e.g. in terms of enrolments and student mix), but also the quality of teaching, learning and research and the support of students and staff in this endeavour.

## **METHODOLOGY: A STARTING POINT**

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) developed a "Course Performance Report" for use in assessing the quality of their courses. Myself and the Academic Registrar, Ms Gillian Luck, visited QUT in December 1998 to discuss this document and a number of other issues. Whilst the University of Wollongong did not wish to produce a course performance report, the concept was very applicable in assisting the development of our Academic Performance Report, expanding the concept to cover a wider range of academic-based monitoring criteria.

The aim for developing an Academic Performance Report was to improve the quality and efficiency of short and long term management and planning by producing a report for each faculty. The benefits of such a report include:

- better informed management decisions
- assistance to monitor the objectives identified in the University Strategic Plan
- ongoing performance monitoring and improvement at the faculty level
- quicker response to markets
- source document for Faculty Action Plans and Rolling Five Year Plans
- source document to meet internal and external data requirements

Examples of questions the report can answer include:

- what is our current status (in terms of enrolments, funding, etc.)?
- are we heading in the right direction to meet 2005 targets?
- what are the market issues?
- how good is our "product"?
- how effectively do we manage our resources?

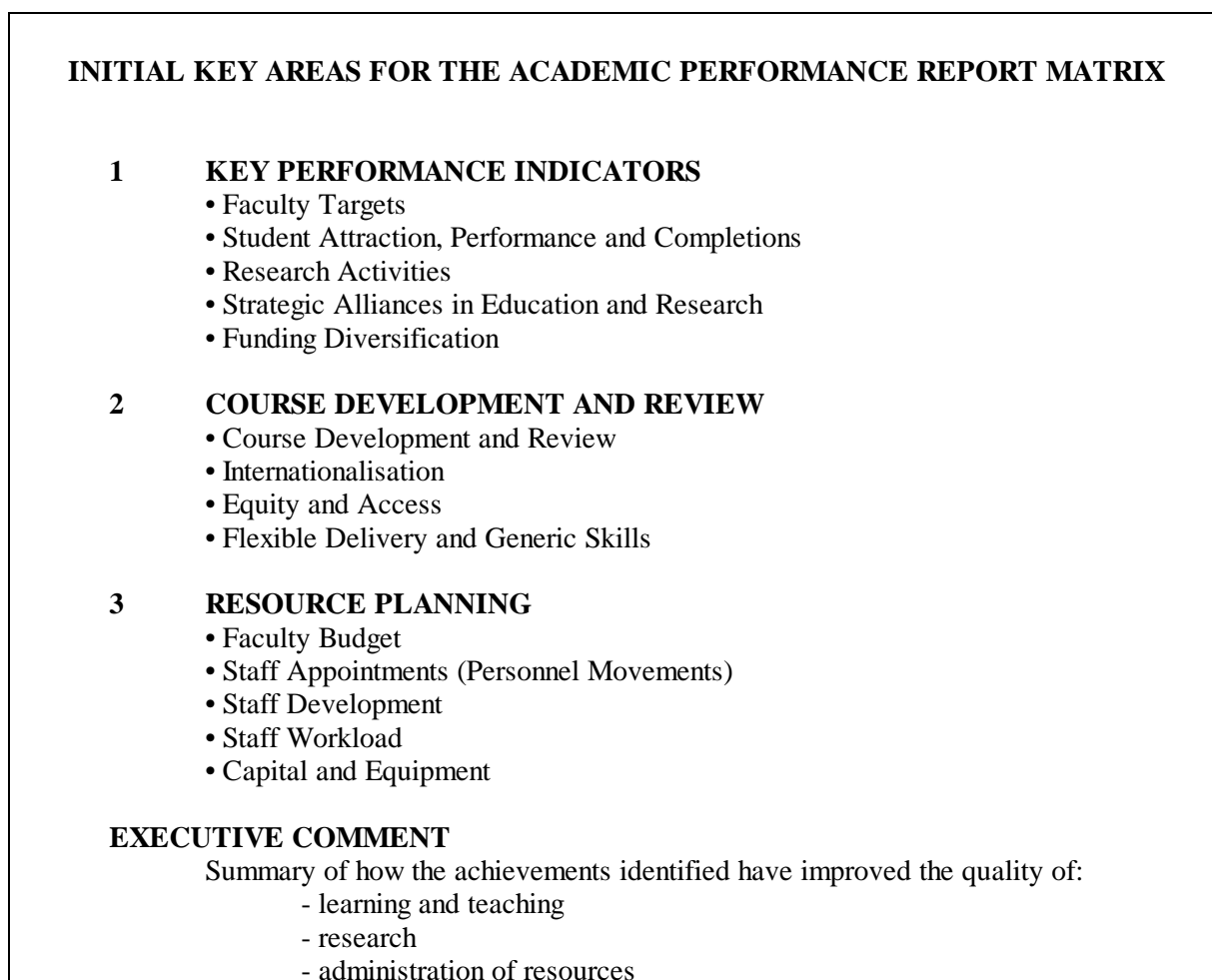
### **METHODOLOGY: REPORT FORMATION**

For each of the major areas identified in the University's Strategic Plan (e.g. teaching and learning, research, internationalisation, resourcing) and Five Year Rolling Plans, indicators currently in use were collated and placed in a matrix that identified: the objective; the reason for collection; indicators of measurement; and data source (see Diagrams 1 and 2). Added to this list was information to be collected to meet external reporting requirements, and any new internal management requirements.

By using the matrix, we were able to ensure that only relevant objectives and indicators remained after consultation with executive, faculties and selected unit directors. By identifying the source of the data (or lack of a source) responsibility for data collection can be managed, and linkages made where necessary. The report thus underwent several modifications and improvements as it was being developed.

By the end of this stage of the process, we had a set of relevant performance indicators for the various sections of the proposed Academic Performance Report.

**Diagram 1: Initial Key Areas for the Academic Performance Report Matrix**



**Diagram 2: Example of Information Matrix**

<b>1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>			
<b>KEY AREA: FACULTY TARGETS</b>			
<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Reason for Collecting this Information:</b>	<b>Performance Indicators:</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
Many of the objectives relate directly to the University's Strategic Plan.	This may be for internal management; meeting Govt. reporting requirements; long term planning; etc.	Qualitative and/or Quantitative.	This refers to which faculty or admin unit has responsibility for collecting the information, and the database (or source document) housing the information.

The methodology of the report formation is probably best explained in Diagram 3 (below).

The indicators identified in the previously mentioned process come from a number of sources, as identified in Diagram 3 by the "INPUT" column. These are brought together to form the Academic Performance Report, which is then distributed to faculties for them to add their own component (e.g. modifying targets, monitoring objectives and strategies, and addressing any additional information requirements for the report). The Academic Performance Report and Faculty Input are thus combined to become Academic Performance Report/Rolling Five Year Academic Plans, which provide the qualitative and quantitative details for a number of other reports (identified in the "OUTPUTS" column).

Note: The Academic Performance Report component includes qualitative and quantitative indicators and very basic interpretation. The Report contains sections that are left blank initially, where Faculties are required to provide comment and input relating to strategies, and outcomes against targets.

**Diagram 3: Links to Academic Reporting**



### WHAT INFORMATION IS INCLUDED IN THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT?

The initial key areas identified in the report matrix were reworked into the following categories:

- 1 **Market Analysis**
  - Market Demand
  - Environmental Analysis
  - Benchmarking
- 2 **Educational Performance**

- Enrolments
- Student Performance and Completion
- Student Satisfaction and Graduate Outcomes
- Teaching Performance
- Course Development and Review

### **3 Research Performance**

- Funding and Income
- Research - Students: enrolments, student performance, satisfaction and completion
- Research - Staff: output, collaboration, qualifications, supervision, grants
- Key Research Areas
- Qualitative Indicators

### **4 Strategic Alliances in Education and Research**

- Report on progress and initiatives commenced in strategic alliances
- Internationalisation: alliances in education and research
- Community Service Activities

### **5 Resource Management**

- Funding Diversification
- Faculty Budget
- Staff Appointments and Movements
- Staff Development
- Staff Workload
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Progress
- Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Progress
- Capital and Equipment

### **6 Quality improvements in teaching and learning, research and administration**

- general statement and comment based on results from rest of report

Each of these areas includes a set of performance indicators (either qualitative or quantitative) for use in assessing faculty performance. Faculties are not compared with each other due to their differing nature and enrolment composition; however, individual faculties are compared to the University average where appropriate. A basic textual summary of results is provided for each key area.

### **FACULTY INPUT**

Within the categories identified above, Faculties were asked to take into consideration the indicators provided to them in the report, and provide feedback in the form of revisions and strategies for keeping long term targets on track. Areas for faculty input include:

<b>Market Demand:</b>	• Targets and strategies: commencing students
<b>Enrolments:</b>	• Equity: progress towards objectives • Implications for forward planning • Specific strategies
<b>Student Performance and Completion:</b>	• Targets and strategies: student performance, progression and completion rates

<b>Course Development and Review:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum development and review: targets and strategies</li> <li>• Planned new course developments and intended course deletions</li> <li>• Annual program for course review</li> <li>• Subject evaluation</li> </ul>
<b>Research Performance:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research activity targets and strategies</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Alliances in Education and Research:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress and initiatives commenced in strategic alliances</li> <li>• Opportunities for domestic and international alliances in education and research</li> </ul>
<b>Internationalisation: alliances in education and research:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress towards objectives</li> </ul>
<b>Community Service Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of activities</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Diversification:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding Diversification: achievement of targets; implications for forward planning; strategies</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty Budget:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty budget, deviations and implications for forward planning</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Appointments and Movements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned staff appointments to address specific targets in education and/or research. Significant deviations from planned budgets and implications for forward planning</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Development:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in staff development activities</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Workload:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty commitment and formula for workload</li> </ul>
<b>Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Progress:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff development activities from an EEO perspective</li> <li>• Composition of major Faculty committees</li> <li>• Staff equity issues and strategies</li> <li>• Progress on above items</li> </ul>
<b>Capital and Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor works and capital plans in support of academic objectives (inc. space and equipment acquisition)</li> </ul>
<b>Quality improvements in teaching and learning, research and administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the achievements identified in the "reporting" section have improved the quality of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning and teaching</li> <li>- research</li> <li>- administration of resources</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Thus at the end of this process we now have a finalised report - the Academic Performance Report/Rolling Five Year Academic Plan - which includes key performance indicators collected from a variety of sources, and faculty comment, objectives and strategies for meeting targets over the next five years. Faculty Action Plans for the next 12 months are one of the first output documents to follow from the production of this report.

## OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

Uses and outcomes for the report are not solely related to the faculty, but also assist in the preparation of various government reports (e.g. DETYA Quality Report), marketing publications and strategies, faculty/ departmental reviews, etc.).

The report will continue to be refined. The one key problem related not so much to the concept of the Performance Report, but to the actual statistics themselves, with Faculty Deans questioning some of

the calculations and definitions. However, it was generally felt that we are on the "right track" to producing a single compilation of information useful for management and planning purposes.

With a round table discussion of the report structure planned, we will be able to identify what additional statistics specific to individual faculty needs, need to be included. It will also help us identify where we need to collect more information than at present. Objectives and indicators can be added or deleted as internal and external reporting requirements change.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Other staff involved in the development and production of the University of Wollongong's Academic Performance Report:

Professor Christine Ewan, Pro Vice-Chancellor  
Ms Gillian Luck, Academic Registrar  
Ms Toni Dobbs, Data and Analysis Officer  
Mr Aden Steinke, Statistics Officer  
Ms Lynn Woodley, Manager, Secretariat  
Ms Jan Sullivan, Policy and Projects Co-ordinator  
Ms Donna West, Policy Officer  
Ms Jane Golding, Policy Officer  
Ms Susan Flint, Policy Officer