

This Report is published by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*, in order to complete the cycle of quality audits initiated by the former Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). This report is not to be taken as an assessment under the Higher Education Standards Framework as defined in the TEQSA legislation.



Australian Government
**Tertiary Education Quality
and Standards Agency**

**REPORT OF AN AUDIT OF
SAE INSTITUTE PTY
LIMITED
OCTOBER 2011**



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OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Australian Government introduced the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) which allows students in non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs) to receive financial assistance for their tuition fees through the FEE-HELP program. The HESA requires that higher education providers (HEPs) whose students may receive FEE-HELP funds meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audit by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines. NSAIs approved under the HESA for this purpose may be referred to as non self-accrediting higher education providers, or NSA-HEPs.

This Report of the audit of SAE Institute Pty Limited (SAE Institute) covers the operations of the Australian subsidiary of a global network of campuses. The Australian legal entity and its operations are referred to in this report hereafter as SAE Institute. While the Australian courses are branded as either SAE Institute or Qantm College, they are managed by the one organisation. This Report provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, and its commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A brief introduction to SAE Institute, including its mission, vision and principles, is given in Appendix A; membership of the Audit Panel in Appendix B; and abbreviations and definitions used in this Report in Appendix C.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's higher education regulatory and quality assurance agency. The *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (the TEQSA Act) established the agency.

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These audits adopt the audit process as previously advised by AUQA. They are concerned with the existence and effectiveness of the quality processes that the organisation has in place to achieve its stated objectives, produce the desired outcomes and meet the needs of the institution's identified constituencies. 'Effectiveness' is judged by the results and standards achieved. The audit also addresses actions taken by the organisation to improve its effectiveness.

NSA-HEP audits, under HESA, consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, firstly, the institution's objectives, and secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). Their primary purpose is to provide the NSA-HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance. In the report of its self-review (the Performance Portfolio or Portfolio), SAE Institute reported against each of the QAFs. The sections in this Report use the four main topic headings provided by the QAFs, as well as a data section. Within each section, all the criteria for that QAF are addressed, but usually in a holistic way rather than criterion by criterion. Quality audits of NSA-HEPs do not include a detailed examination of the academic quality assurance processes for programs of study.

THE AUDIT PROCESS

An Audit Panel was appointed, the members of which are listed at Appendix B. On 1 April 2011, SAE Institute presented its submission to AUQA, comprised of a 45-page report against the

individual QAF criteria and supporting documents. The Panel met in Melbourne both in person and by teleconference on 4 May 2011 to consider these materials, and requested SAE Institute to present more documents, which were considered in the course of the audit.

SAE Institute is part of a group that has campuses around the world (SAE Global), and during the preparatory stages of the audit SAE Global was acquired by Navitas Ltd (Navitas), an Australian company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX). The scope of the audit was confined to SAE Institute and Qantm College degrees accredited in Australia (by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training) and delivered by SAE Institute to campuses in Byron Bay, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, and also Dubai. The Panel visited the campuses in Perth and Sydney and spoke to staff and students based at those campuses. The main Audit Visit (to the campus in Melbourne) took place from 8 to 10 June 2011. During this visit, the Panel spoke by telephone to members of the SAE Institute Governing Council (the Council), including two members from Navitas. The Panel also read registration and course accreditation reports by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 100 people during these audit visits, including SAE Institute directors, managers, senior staff, teaching and administrative staff, adjunct staff, students and external stakeholders. Sessions were also available for any member of the SAE Institute community to meet the Audit Panel, but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 10 June 2011, and does not take into account any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by SAE Institute as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of SAE Institute's activities encompassed by the audit, this Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

This Report contains a summary of audit findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an area in need of attention, whether in respect of approach, deployment or results, which is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by SAE Institute, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. It is acknowledged that recommendations in this Report may have resource implications.

Quotations taken from the Portfolio are identified as (PF p).

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other favourable comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of this Report.

INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

In its first phase of entrepreneurial development SAE Institute successfully built a network of campuses (first in Australia and then overseas) in education for audio production. Film production and creative media education were then added to the portfolio, allowing SAE Institute to become a niche player in a broader range of specialist programs, with a strong emphasis on industry links.

In the preparatory phase of moving from vocational education and training to higher education in 2007, the founder engaged a senior academic manager from an Australian university, initially to strengthen academic foundations as Chair of the Academic Board, and subsequently as CEO to develop systematic processes for the expanded operations. These processes are being codified into policies and procedures in accordance with a more formalised approach to management that is appropriate to SAE Institute's more mature phase of development and to its status now as part of a listed public company.

In a relatively short time, the CEO (ably assisted by SAE Institute's Quality Officer) has made significant progress down this path. While further progress remains to be made on a number of issues, it is evident that SAE Institute's capacity for self-review is extremely thorough, and that it has identified almost all areas where further improvement is needed.

One of the reasons for the swift progress is that SAE Institute has a 'can do' culture in which both academic and professional staff are highly committed to taking up opportunities for improvement. In addition, SAE Institute has outstanding staff development, with part-time and casual staff members being fully integrated into the collegial life of each campus.

Because of its focus on creative technologies, SAE Institute attracts staff who manifest great enthusiasm and passion for their work, which was evident in all the groups interviewed by the Panel.

The integration of SAE Institute into the Navitas group is very recent, and some further work is needed to modify governance practices and documentation to reflect the new corporate structure.

Academic governance is effective, and SAE Institute's Academic Board is very active in initiating academic policy and improvements.

SAE Institute courses are academically demanding and attract a number of students who are not necessarily well prepared for this level of study. Consequently, SAE Institute is aware of the need to carefully consider admissions policies and provide academic support services to help students adjust to the demands of the courses, in order to make sustained improvements to retention and unit completion rates. Academic support is largely provided on a one-to-one basis, although integration into the Navitas group is opening up opportunities for more formal programs.

SAE Institute has a comprehensive framework for reviewing and obtaining feedback on curricula and delivery. The process is focused primarily on making improvements at the unit level and, to a lesser degree, on course level issues and learning outcomes.

A summary of commendations, affirmations and recommendations follows. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in this Report.

COMMENDATIONS

1. SAE Institute is commended for the global opportunities and perspective it offers to staff and students.....	2
2. SAE Institute’s Academic Board is commended for its active contributions to academic quality improvement.	5
3. SAE Institute is commended for its engagement with industry, and especially for the active input into the curricula from professional and industry experts through the Program Advisory Committees.....	5
4. SAE Institute is commended for its successful development and deployment of a suite of integrated policies applicable across both SAE Institute and Qantm College courses, and across all campuses.....	7
5. SAE Institute is commended for its comprehensive range of unit guides, which represent a sound basis for the curricula.....	10
6. SAE Institute is commended for its effective introduction of an external examiner system.	12
7. SAE Institute is commended for its comprehensive framework for feedback on units, which combines quantitative and qualitative feedback and is used to initiate improvements.	15
8. SAE Institute is commended for its commitment to, and effective implementation of, staff development, especially in making the transition from vocational education and training to higher education course delivery.....	18
9. SAE Institute is commended for ensuring that part-time and sessional staff members are fully included in campus operations and activities and in collegial dialogue about the courses they teach.	18
10. SAE Institute is commended for the current level of facilities and equipment provided for student learning at the Institute.....	20
11. SAE Institute is commended for the significant improvement in library resources over recent years, and is encouraged to continue on this trajectory.	21

AFFIRMATIONS

1. SAE Institute’s development of systematic reporting of academic performance data to its Academic Board is affirmed.	4
2. The continuing development of SAE Institute’s planning framework, including comprehensive KPIs, business plans, and a systematic reporting against the KPIs, is affirmed.	6
3. SAE Institute’s review of admission policies and the implementation of a systematic admissions framework aimed at improving retention rates is affirmed.	9

4. The strategies and retention project deployed by SAE Institute to improve student retention and unit completion rates are affirmed.	9
5. SAE Institute’s plan to fully document the curriculum review framework by the end of 2011, which should ensure that course-level learning outcomes are systematically addressed, is affirmed.	10
6. SAE Institute’s development of detailed guidelines on assessment and moderation is affirmed.	11
7. SAE Institute’s establishment of the Examiners Committee to formalise the finalisation of assessment outcomes and moderation processes is affirmed.	11
8. SAE Institute’s initiatives to improve the turnaround time for student assessment items are affirmed.	12
9. SAE Institute’s plan to increase the integration of workplace learning within the curriculum and extend placement opportunities for students in SAE Institute courses is affirmed.	14
10. SAE Institute’s review of the scheduling of assessment items and the overall assessment workload is affirmed.	15
11. SAE Institute’s development of appropriate forms of scholarship and integration of scholarship within the curricula is affirmed.	15
12. SAE Institute’s exploration of ways to make academic support programs available for its students from within the Navitas group is affirmed.	19
13. SAE Institute’s continuing expansion of facilities and equipment in line with growing student numbers is affirmed.	20
14. SAE Institute’s continuing implementation of the recommendations of its external review of IT infrastructure is affirmed.	21
15. SAE Institute’s cautious development of selected units for flexible delivery and the development of a capability to provide course materials to students externally are affirmed.	22

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that SAE Institute plan the introduction of more specific forms of support for overseas students as it scales up international student numbers.	2
2. It is recommended that the SAE Institute Institutional Governance document, including the terms of reference of the Governing Council, be revised to clarify at which level of the overall Navitas–SAE corporate group the key decisions are to be made, and to clarify the role of the Boards of Studies.	3

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The School of Audio Engineering (SAE) was founded in 1976 in Sydney, offering courses in audio engineering and production. In 2004, the first degree course was introduced at the Byron Bay campus, and in 2005, SAE acquired Qantm College from the Queensland Government. Qantm College had originally been established by the Queensland Government and several universities to provide interactive media degrees.

SAE and Qantm College were merged in 2009 to form one company and one integrated set of operations in the three fields of:

- audio production
- film production
- creative media.

After establishing a network of campuses in Australia, SAE replicated the model successfully in many overseas countries, forming a global network comprising more than 50 campuses in over 20 countries. In early 2011, as referred to in the preceding section, SAE Institute Pty Limited (the legal entity) was acquired, together with the entire global network, by Navitas, an Australian company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX).

SAE Institute sets out its vision, mission and values in the document SAE Qantm Strategic Directions 2010–2014 (Strategic Directions document).

1.1 INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

SAE Institute's vision is:

To be the world leader in private post-secondary education for creative media technologies.

SAE Institute describes its mission as follows:

- We provide specialist vocational and higher education courses worldwide to inspire and develop our graduates.
- Our courses emphasise practical experience and the needs of students and industry.
- Our students access the latest knowledge and outstanding facilities to enhance their skills.
- We are globally networked as a professional community in creative media.

SAE Institute's managers firmly believe that the global network represents one of the great strengths of the group. Students can easily make arrangements to undertake part of their course at other campuses anywhere in the network, as the overseas courses are to a large degree aligned with the Australian courses. Several members of the academic staff interviewed by the Panel had transferred to SAE Institute from overseas members of the network, and other members of staff and students were clearly interested in spending periods of time overseas.

An International Standards and Quality Committee is a forum for the interchange of ideas and information between Australian and overseas members about academic

developments and quality assurance across the network. It includes a member from Middlesex University, which accredits degrees offered at a number of overseas campuses apart from the Australian programs delivered in Dubai. In addition, the CEO of the Australian operations, who is a member of the committee, is also Director of Academic Affairs, SAE Global.

It is clear that the level of interaction between SAE Institute and SAE Global is significant, and that it does indeed open up many opportunities for both staff and students, as well as developing a global perspective in students.

Commendation 1

SAE Institute is commended for the global opportunities and perspective it offers to staff and students.

SAE Institute aims to deploy a complete suite of programs extending from the existing vocational education and training (VET) programs and bachelors programs to masters level programs by 2013. The masters programs are under development.

The National Marketing Plan for the period 2011–2014 sets ambitious targets for growth in overall student numbers by 2014.

The opportunity to increase recruitment of overseas students is seen as a key benefit of the merger with Navitas. SAE Institute will need to plan carefully for this and to increase specific support services for overseas students, which so far consist mainly of supplementary documents and one additional orientation session.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that SAE Institute plan the introduction of more specific forms of support for overseas students as it scales up international student numbers.

1.2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE

SAE Institute Pty Limited remains a separate legal entity and a registered higher education provider in its own right, but is now included within the Navitas group as part of SAE Global. SAE Global was acquired through a special-purpose legal vehicle, Navitas SAE Holdings Pty Ltd, and has the status of a division within Navitas. The former board of SAE Global has been replaced by the SAE–Navitas Advisory Board that oversees the division as a whole and is chaired by the CEO of Navitas, to whom all divisions report.

The most immediate link from SAE Institute Pty Limited to Navitas runs through the Executive General Manager, University Programs, at Navitas, who is also Chair of the Governing Council of SAE Institute Pty Limited. Consequently, the Governing Council is now the board of a subsidiary company (which is itself part of a division of the Navitas group), which involves some change in its status.

The members of the Governing Council interviewed by the Panel (including both the Navitas directors and an independent director) showed a clear understanding, in general terms, of their status as members of a subsidiary board. They explained that the Navitas Executive General Manager, University Programs would oversee the strategic directions of SAE Institute, and that the Council would retain a key role in monitoring quality.

SAE Institute's CEO has authority to approve all capital and operating expenditure within budget, and the SAE–Navitas Advisory Board approves expenditure that exceeds

budget. The budget parameters, including forward growth projections for the organisation as a whole, are discussed by the SAE–Navitas Advisory Board, and the final budget is approved by the Navitas Board of Directors.

The members of the Governing Council acknowledge that the precise delineation of responsibilities between Navitas and SAE Institute Pty Limited is ‘a work in progress’. The current version of the Council’s terms of reference is part of a compilation known as SAE Institute’s Institutional Governance document, which was prepared in December 2010 just as the acquisition by Navitas was being agreed. The document does not elucidate the relationship of the Council to the other governance bodies in the wider group and formulations in it reflect the previous status of SAE Institute and Qantm College as separate legal entities. The key role of the Governing Council as expressed in the terms of reference do not reflect its delimited responsibilities and reporting lines to higher bodies, for example:

- to exercise overall responsibility for the pursuit of the Mission and Vision of the Institutions.
- to approve and monitor the implementation of the Institutions’ strategic directions, strategic and business planning, and annual budgets.

The terms of reference need revising now that the acquisition is being implemented, to clarify at which level of the overall corporate group (SAE Institute, or SAE Global, or Navitas) key decisions are to be made. The role of the Boards of Studies of the various campuses also needs clarification in their terms of reference (section 1.4).

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the SAE Institute Institutional Governance document, including the terms of reference of the Governing Council, be revised to clarify at which level of the overall Navitas–SAE corporate group the key decisions are to be made, and to clarify the role of the Boards of Studies.

The Council and the senior managers are clear that Navitas will leave SAE Institute with a wide sphere of autonomy to deliver the core business. But to achieve business synergies, Navitas plans to integrate ‘back office’ support functions, the first priorities being finance, human resources and IT.

1.3 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The CEO of SAE Institute reports regularly to the Governing Council and details progress against the priorities and performance indicators in the Strategic Directions document. The Council also receives quarterly financial reports.

The Council has recently approved a new Risk Management Framework, revised to align with the Navitas framework. Council receives regular updates on risk management, and is apprised of significant emerging risks and other developments that need to be brought to its attention by the CEO.

Throughout the second half of 2010, the CEO reported to the Council on the development of the strategic planning framework, budgeting for the following year, transnational program developments, staff development and significant internal reviews (IT and marketing), course developments and operational developments.

The independent Chair of the Academic Board is not a member of the Council, but presents a detailed report directly to the Council once a year. At her most recent report in December 2010, the Chair of the Academic Board reported on matters such as the

outcomes of the board's recent self-review, the contribution made to quality by the external examination system in its first year of operation, the need to strengthen the internal examination process, the work of the Program Advisory Committees, and the development of a nationally consistent approach to appeals.

An induction program is provided to new members of the Governing Council.

The minutes of the Academic Board are circulated to the Council after each board meeting, and items arising from board meetings are frequently discussed at Council meetings.

1.4 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

In its Terms of Reference, the role of the Academic Board is specified in the following way:

The Academic Board is the peak academic body of SAE Institute and Qantm College ("the Institutions"). It is the principal academic body responsible for establishing and maintaining the highest standards of teaching, learning, scholarship and research in these Colleges. It provides independent, authoritative advice to the SAE-Qantm Governing Council on all academic matters.

SAE Institute's Academic Board has the range of specific responsibilities normally seen in Australian academic boards, including responsibility for approving course proposals (for onward transmission to the relevant government accreditation authority), academic standards and quality assurance, and for formulating and reviewing academic policies and procedures.

The Academic Board recently conducted a self-review, which has led to a number of improvement initiatives, including the following:

- establishment of the Examiners Committee to take responsibility for monitoring assessment standards and national moderation
- a policy on credit transfer and recognition of prior learning (approved)
- a review of admission policy and processes (commenced)
- a review of the board's data requirements (in progress)
- an induction pack for board members (developed).

The National Academic Coordinator has started presenting more data on academic performance to the Academic Board (derived from the organisational strategic directions) as part of a wider effort to develop reporting according to key performance indicators (KPIs) (section 1.5), and this should be further developed.

Affirmation 1

SAE Institute's development of systematic reporting of academic performance data to its Academic Board is affirmed.

The Academic Board has pursued an active agenda of quality improvement, including specific initiatives such as:

- recommending to management that a staff satisfaction survey be developed, which could be benchmarked
- commissioning a discussion paper on admissions policy
- improving interaction between Program Advisory Committees.

Commendation 2

SAE Institute's Academic Board is commended for its active contributions to academic quality improvement.

Members of the Academic Board strongly endorse SAE Institute's organisational culture, making comments such as: 'This organisation is a pleasure to be involved with'; and 'If you want to start something you can', since SAE Institute is a 'can do' organisation.

There is a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) for each program, comprising external higher education representatives and professional or industry representatives, as well as the National Academic Coordinator and two Campus Academic Coordinators. The PACs are charged with providing advice and reviewing the various courses and course documentation, and ensuring that the curricula are informed by the needs of the professions and industries that they prepare students to enter.

The PACs play an important role in the review of programs especially at the unit level. The active input into the curricula by external experts is exceptional and undoubtedly contributes to SAE Institute's ability to prepare students for the workforce.

Commendation 3

SAE Institute is commended for its engagement with industry, and especially for the active input into the curricula from professional and industry experts through the Program Advisory Committees.

Each campus has its own Board of Studies (and there are separate Boards of Studies for SAE Institute programs and Qantm College programs in Melbourne and Sydney). According to their terms of reference, these boards are part of the academic decision-making structure that considers academic proposals on their way to the Academic Board, of which they are subcommittees. However, it is clear from the minutes of the Boards of Studies and from interviews with staff and students that their role is mainly to provide a forum for student representatives to provide qualitative feedback about courses. The terms of reference of the Boards of Studies need to be revised to make them consistent with this role of the boards. This could be done as part of the review of the institutional governance document (Recommendation 2).

1.5 STRATEGIC PLANNING

In April 2010, the Governing Council approved an overall planning framework for SAE Institute, which provides for:

- a strategic directions document
- an organisational business plan
- campus business plans
- a risk management plan
- a capital development and infrastructure plan
- a marketing and media management plan
- a learning, teaching and curriculum plan
- plans for IT services, the Library and Student Support Services.

Many of these documents and plans have been developed or are in the course of being developed.

The Strategic Directions document was prepared through a strategic planning exercise completed before the acquisition of SAE Institute by Navitas. As a result of Navitas's

endorsement of SAE Institute's core business and current strategic directions, the Strategic Directions document is still the basis of forward planning.

The following academic KPIs are approved as part of the Strategic Directions document:

- successful course accreditation outcomes
- benchmarked teaching and learning support resources
- retention and course completion statistics
- trend data on academic staff development and qualifications
- successful promotion of scholarly activities among staff
- student satisfaction survey results
- graduate experience survey results.

At the time of the Audit Visit, SAE Institute had prepared a detailed Business Plan, which contains a set of relevant KPIs that will be used to track performance against business targets. The Business Plan had been approved in principle by the Governing Council, but is being given further consideration by the Navitas Executive General Manager, University Programs.

The adoption of a wider set of KPIs, including those in the Strategic Directions document and in the Business Plan, will undoubtedly enhance the ability of the Council to monitor SAE Institute's performance. A clear framework of reporting against these KPIs should be developed.

Affirmation 2

The continuing development of SAE Institute's planning framework, including comprehensive KPIs, business plans, and a systematic reporting against the KPIs, is affirmed.

Each SAE Institute campus has a manager who produces a detailed Campus Plan. The Campus Plans are aligned with SAE Institute's strategic directions. Each semester the Campus Managers undertake forward planning for the following semester, starting with a consideration of the next trimester's student intake. Orders are placed for additional equipment and resources required for expected increases in student numbers.

2 ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

2.1 ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

Reporting to the CEO is a National Academic Coordinator who is also the Head of Academic Services. The National Academic Coordinator plays a key role in aligning practices across the network of Australian campuses with academic policies; in co-ordinating curriculum design, delivery and change; in sharing good practice; ensuring consistency in assessment and academic standards; assuring the quality of the educational experience for students; and supporting professional development for staff and the development of academic scholarship.

Because of its nature as a distributed network of small campuses, much of the academic management of the organisation happens at campus level, through the Campus Academic Coordinators (CACs), who are responsible within their campuses for implementing academic policies and procedures, enhancing the educational experience for students, promoting professional excellence in teaching, learning and scholarship, and providing academic leadership. The CACs are also part of the membership of the Examiners Committee (sections 1.4 and 2.3.2). The National Academic Coordinator holds regular meetings with the CACs to ensure alignment between campuses and courses.

At the point of merger between SAE Institute and Qantm College, each of the former organisations had its own sets of academic policies and procedures. Since that time, SAE Institute has undertaken a policy harmonisation project, which has led to the approval and successful deployment of a single set of policies across the whole network. This will be followed by upgrading of related procedures and guidelines.

The Audit Panel reviewed a number of these policies and found them to be fit for purpose, including policies for:

- academic quality assurance and improvement
- learning and teaching
- student selection and admissions
- student assessment.

Staff show a high degree of awareness of the policies, about which they learn through workshops, training and discussions with their supervisors. Staff also confirm that it is easy to access these policies through the staff portal to obtain guidance on how they are to be applied. The staff induction program includes orientation on the policies and procedures.

Further policies and procedures still need to be developed for some aspects of academic quality (section 2.3).

Commendation 4

SAE Institute is commended for its successful development and deployment of a suite of integrated policies applicable across both SAE Institute and Qantm College courses, and across all campuses.

2.2 ADMISSION AND RETENTION

SAE Institute's admission policies are currently under review, and the Academic Board has commissioned and considered a discussion paper titled 'Setting Entry Level Requirements for SAE/Qantm'.

The discussion paper summarises the current entry requirements as follows:

As a higher education provider, SAE Institute's policies state that a prospective student should have completed Year 12 HSC, or a Certificate IV level as defined by the AQF, or be over 21 years of age.

According to the discussion paper, the review of these requirements is necessary because of the need to take further action to reduce student attrition at SAE Institute. SAE Institute wishes also to increase unit completion rates.

Unconsolidated SAE Institute data was made available through the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)—that is, separate data was provided for SAE Institute courses and for Qantm College courses. Analysis of the data (data items 5.1 to 5.5) reveals that relative to available data for the NSA-HEP sector:

- SAE Institute tertiary entrance (TE) scores in 2009 were comparatively high
- domestic student attrition rates for SAE Institute courses were comparatively low in 2007, but increased in 2008 to be relatively high
- overseas student attrition rates for SAE Institute courses were in the low-to-middle range
- domestic and overseas student attrition rates for Qantm College courses were comparatively low in 2008
- progress rates for SAE Institute courses for domestic students were comparatively low in 2007 and 2008, and progress rates for overseas students declined from 2007 to 2008
- progress rates for Qantm College courses were in the middle of the range for domestic students for 2008–09, and decreased for overseas students in 2009.

Internal data indicates significant variability in retention in courses from year to year, which is in some cases related to small enrolment numbers.

The discussion paper made a number of recommendations, including:

- that a minimum TE score of 65 be set for automatic admission
- that students with a lower TE score could be admitted on the basis of a strong portfolio
- that course-specific entry requirements be considered
- that a foundation program be established.

These recommendations are under consideration by SAE Institute's management. The Panel spoke to many groups of staff about admissions policy. All agreed that, while there was a place for a minimum TE score in the process, it would not be desirable to rely solely on the TE score in making admissions decisions. Staff believe that the TE score alone is not necessarily an adequate guide to aptitude in the creative media fields.

The importance of an effective admissions policy is reinforced by some students who commented that, despite the best efforts of staff to provide accurate information to prospective students before admission, many students in first year were not prepared for the academic nature of some assessment tasks and for the workload required to make good progress. SAE Institute is making more use of individual interviews with

prospective students to increase their understanding of the demands of the courses before they decide to enrol.

Affirmation 3

SAE Institute's review of admission policies and the implementation of a systematic admissions framework aimed at improving retention rates is affirmed.

SAE Institute believes, on the basis of analysis of its internal data, that its attrition rates are equal to or better than the sector average, but is nonetheless pursuing a number of further actions to increase retention, including:

- appointing dedicated Student Service Advisers to each campus
- holding teaching workshops for academic staff
- student mentoring
- reviewing assessment load and distribution
- establishing a retention project to coordinate actions and results across campuses.

The Panel received favourable feedback from students and staff on the contributions made by the Student Service Advisers, who actively engage with students and refer them where necessary to Course Academic Coordinators and/or to internal or external support services. The Course Academic Coordinators make individual arrangements for academic assistance and a study plan is developed for each student (section 3.3).

Affirmation 4

The strategies and retention project deployed by SAE Institute to improve student retention and unit completion rates are affirmed.

2.3 TEACHING AND LEARNING

2.3.1 Curriculum Design and Review

Ideas for new courses or course changes and innovation are drawn from diverse sources, including the Academic Board, the Program Advisory Committees, the CEO, and the Campus Managers. Approval by the CEO is required to ensure alignment between strategic business and academic objectives. A course proposal is then drafted by the National Academic Coordinator, who directs it through the approval process leading through the Program Advisory Committees to the Academic Board.

SAE Institute normally undertakes a review of all programs midway through the accreditation cycle. Units within the courses are selected for review after consideration of feedback from academic staff through the Course Academic Coordinators, feedback from students through the Boards of Studies and student surveys, and feedback from external academics and industry representatives through the Program Advisory Committees. During the unit review, input is sought from relevant unit coordinators and academic staff across all campuses and the Program Advisory Committees. Arising from this process, the National Academic Coordinator and the Senior Management Group approve minor changes, and approval of major changes is sought (via the Academic Board) from the New South Wales Government Accreditation Authority.

The documentation of this process is not well developed, and the SAE Institute Learning Teaching and Curriculum Plan 2011–2014 includes a commitment to develop appropriate documentation by the end of 2011. The current system is very focused on unit review, and the new framework should ensure that course-level learning outcomes are systematically addressed.

Affirmation 5

SAE Institute's plan to fully document the curriculum review framework by the end of 2011, which should ensure that course-level learning outcomes are systematically addressed, is affirmed.

The curricula are prescribed and outlined in unit guides that are developed to a standard format. Each unit guide details:

- aims and learning outcomes
- assessment items to be completed and their comparative weighting
- core texts
- academic staff
- overview of lessons, week by week
- assessment guidelines, including requirements and assessment criteria for coursework assessments
- reading requirements and recommended further reading.

The learning outcomes are well formulated and the required content has been consistently included. Collectively, the unit guides represent a sound basis for the curricula.

Commendation 5

SAE Institute is commended for its comprehensive range of unit guides, which represent a sound basis for the curricula.

Graduate attributes to guide the development of all curricula have been selected and will be embedded in units as part of the next cycle of course review, commencing in the second half of 2011.

2.3.2 Assessment, Moderation and Academic Standards

SAE Institute is developing a system for ensuring the consistency and appropriateness of its assessment practices.

SAE Institute's academic policy for learning and teaching provides that both criterion-referenced assessment and norm-referenced assessment may be used to evaluate the achievement of student learning outcomes. The policy requires that students must be provided with clear descriptions of the standards of performance required and the marking criteria when each assessment task is announced, and that the conduct of student assessment must be transparent and fair.

The National Academic Coordinator is a key player in convening regular meetings and discussions between the Campus Academic Coordinators to plan assessment, ensure it is carried out and undertake moderation of assessment outcomes.

The Campus Academic Coordinators are responsible for coordinating all teaching and learning activities on each campus, and take part in the planning and delivery of assessment and in moderation activities.

Unit coordinators play a particularly important role, ensuring that:

- each assessment task matches the specified outcomes and performance criteria listed in the unit guide
- where feasible, assessment tasks within and between units are integrated
- a sample of student submissions is 'cross-marked' to promote consistency in marking
- all relevant resources required for the assessment task are available

- accurate and current records of students' performance are maintained
- timely feedback is provided to students
- assessment tasks follow the guidelines for criterion-referenced assessment.

Moderation and the finalisation of assessment outcomes across the network have been undertaken mainly at campus level until recently. SAE Institute is implementing a number of measures to raise the standard of these.

Harmonised guidelines for assessment and supporting procedures are being developed. A draft document contains guidelines on topics, including the overall philosophy of assessment, assessment rubrics, descriptive criteria for grading, pre-assessment moderation (to ensure makers have a shared understanding), post-assessment moderation, selective use of double marking, campus-level moderation and cross-campus moderation.

Affirmation 6

SAE Institute's development of detailed guidelines on assessment and moderation is affirmed.

In February 2011, the Academic Board approved the establishment of the Examiners Committee to formalise the finalisation of assessment outcomes. This committee will be responsible for:

- reviewing grade outcomes and grade distributions across all units
- undertaking grade moderation as appropriate
- monitoring and reviewing consistency and fairness in assessment across brands and campuses
- monitoring student progression and candidature.

While these functions are already undertaken in practice by the Campus Academic Coordinators, the establishment of the Examiners Committee will enable them to be undertaken in a more systematic way.

Affirmation 7

SAE Institute's establishment of the Examiners Committee to formalise the finalisation of assessment outcomes and moderation processes is affirmed.

Another particularly significant recent initiative is the establishment of an external examiners panel, which consists of one member for each of the academic fields in which SAE Institute offers programs and a chief examiner. The external examiner system has been modelled on the Code of Practice of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the United Kingdom. SAE Institute's panel has been in existence since 2010 and operates by reviewing a range of assessment outcomes for selected units, selecting a sample that is sufficiently comprehensive to show a range of work reflecting different levels of student competency. The panel also checks that assessment expectations are appropriate for specific subject levels, examines parity of student results in the same assessment across campuses, and reviews samples of assessment tasks and completed assignments to gauge the academic standards being achieved. A variety of assessment types is selected for review, for example: essay; report; logbook and portfolio.

The Chief External Examiner's Report for 2010 reported that areas of inconsistency in lecturers' feedback and the grading awarded had diminished since the first review in April 2010. The external examiners found that the overall standard of essay writing

needed to be improved. The Chief External Examiner remarked that integration between theory and practice could be improved.

For a private institute to introduce an external examiner system based on international good practice is an exceptional initiative, which does SAE Institute great credit.

Commendation 6

SAE Institute is commended for its effective introduction of an external examiner system.

At a more practical level, a standardised grading framework for all programs and campuses will be implemented in the course administration system (CAS) in the second half of 2011.

Students expressed frustration with slow turnaround times for items of assessment, and reported that it was quite common to commence a unit in the next semester before receiving a grade for the previous semester's units, even where the previous unit was a prerequisite. SAE Institute has reduced the length of semesters from 15 to 14 weeks as one way of addressing this problem, and managers reported that they were working to reduce turnaround times to two weeks. Planned improvements to CAS will facilitate faster uploading of results.

Affirmation 8

SAE Institute's initiatives to improve the turnaround time for student assessment items are affirmed.

Guidelines are being developed prior to the introduction of plagiarism detection software in the course of 2011. This will support more rigorous implementation of SAE Institute's Academic Honesty Policy.

Members of the Academic Board's Examiners Committee and the Chief External Examiner expressed confidence in the academic standards at SAE Institute, and commented that staff commitment to making improvements was exceptional and unwavering.

2.3.3 Transnational Programs

There are two Australian programs, the Bachelor of Audio Production and the Bachelor of Film Production, that are being delivered in Dubai through the Dubai member of the global network. The terms and conditions of this partnership arrangement are specified very thoroughly in a collaboration agreement which covers:

- course details and structure
- unit outlines and guides
- teaching resources and course materials
- assessment and moderation
- quality assurance and standards
- appointment of academic staff
- staff induction and procedures
- academic policies and procedures
- enrolments
- student progress
- student support.

The agreement provides a framework for assuring the quality of the Australian programs in Dubai.

There is a reference in the Governing Council's minutes to the need for greater clarity in the financial reporting and governing relationship between the Dubai operations and SAE Institute in Australia. However, the former National Academic Coordinator of Qantm College has been appointed as the Campus Academic Coordinator in Dubai, and the Panel formed the view that the Dubai operations were now well integrated with the Australian organisation.

Mentoring in higher education teaching is being provided to staff in Dubai by arrangement with a senior academic from a local university. Academic staff members are also being enrolled in graduate certificates in higher education teaching and learning. Library resources are being increased progressively over time.

2.3.4 Engagement with Industry and Work Integrated Learning

A key part of SAE Institute's mission is an emphasis on practical experience and meeting the needs of the creative media industries. Staff are justifiably proud of the extent of their engagement with these industries, which underpins the inclusion of work integrated learning within the student experience.

Many staff members, both academic and professional, continue to practise within their own fields, which helps maintain the currency of their industry knowledge and their links with industry.

Qantm College courses include a double unit internship, which 30 to 50 students each year undertake. After applying for an internship and being interviewed by a panel, students are placed with an employer. A Qantm College academic staff member visits the intern on site to ensure that the student is receiving appropriate mentoring and suitable work, and the student completes related assessment, including weekly reports, a report about the relevant industry, and a personal portfolio of work undertaken during the placement. The employer also submits a report to Qantm College. A formal agreement is signed between SAE Institute and the employer in which both parties commit to assurances about the placement. This is good practice and provides a secure basis for the placement.

Students of SAE courses do not have the benefit of a formal internship built into their course, and many students expressed a desire to have this kind of opportunity (and also to be able to compile an equivalent of the Qantm College students' 'show-reels', which display examples of their creative projects). At the same time, SAE students are frequently able to work at local festivals and events outside the curriculum, gaining valuable experience in a real-world setting. Industry advisers explained to the Audit Panel that the nature of the audio industry in particular had changed in recent years, and there were few major studios left that were able to offer internships as the industry was now largely organised on the basis of freelance work. Campus Academic Coordinators indicated that they were exploring options for introducing more structured work experience into the SAE courses in the next few years.

One of the findings of SAE Institute's self-review was that workplace learning could be better integrated with the curriculum, and the Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Plan includes a strategy to 'develop an industry-informed and authentic learning strategy for application in each course'.

Affirmation 9

SAE Institute's plan to increase the integration of workplace learning within the curriculum and extend placement opportunities for students in SAE Institute courses is affirmed.

External practitioners from industry who are familiar with SAE Institute graduates confirm that these graduates adapt very quickly to employment or work placements due to their high level of hands-on skills and experience with high-end equipment. Graduates confirm that they found their courses to be a good preparation for employment or self-employment.

SAE Institute provided many examples of industry engagement that link its programs and students to industry and the workplace. One such example is a program of guest lectures and master-classes by industry experts providing insights into the latest industry practice.

2.4 MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

There are multiple avenues for students to give feedback on their course and on the quality of the student experience, many of which have been in place for some years.

The feedback framework approved by the CEO in November 2010 includes:

- orientation week survey
- consultations with the Boards of Studies
- survey of teaching every two years (and for academic staff in the first teaching period)
- unit surveys
- course experience survey and graduate survey (CEQ is to be introduced in 2011)
- student services and facilities survey (every two years)
- industry and employer feedback through the Program Advisory Committees
- staff survey every three years (starting in 2012)
- student exit survey.

The report of the 2010 (internal) Course Experience Survey shows that:

- overall satisfaction by course and by campus exceeded a score of 3 ('mostly agree') in all cases
- students reported heavy workload and pressure in some courses, especially in the Bachelor of Interactive Media
- four items had received scores below 3 in the Bachelor of Applied Multimedia.

The National Academic Coordinator reviews the outcomes of surveys, and data for each campus is distributed to the Campus Manager and the Campus Academic Coordinator. Emerging trends are discussed in meetings of the Campus Academic Coordinators and unit results are taken into consideration in unit reviews. Campus Academic Co-ordinators hold discussions with any staff members who receive a sequence of poor ratings, to try and improve their performance.

SAE Institute understands that workload is an issue in some courses, and steps are being taken to improve the scheduling of assessment items and reduce the total workload of assessment where necessary.

Some students believe that the trimester system creates pressure to absorb too much material too quickly, while others welcome the opportunity to finish their degree in only two years. Students can reduce to a 75 per cent load (completing the course over a longer period) if they are experiencing problems with workload.

Affirmation 10

SAE Institute's review of the scheduling of assessment items and the overall assessment workload is affirmed.

Diverse sources of feedback are collected by the Program Advisory Committees. The minutes of these committees show that this feedback is used to initiate improvements to SAE Institute courses. The meetings of the Boards of Studies provide an effective qualitative forum for the student voice, although they seem to be most effective for local campus issues, and students are often not aware of what action is taken about issues that go beyond the scope of the particular campus.

Commendation 7

SAE Institute is commended for its comprehensive framework for feedback on units, which combines quantitative and qualitative feedback and is used to initiate improvements.

Overall, SAE Institute is responsive to feedback, although the feedback system is highly focused on the unit level and there is less evidence of systematic review and responsiveness at the course level.

2.5 SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

SAE Institute recognises that a sustained drive is needed to complete its journey from VET sector teaching to higher education sector teaching in its new courses, and to create a true higher education environment for students and staff.

Accordingly, in 2009 the Governing Council approved a paper titled 'A Strategic and Systematic Approach to Staff Development in SAE-Qantm'. This paper outlined a framework that includes scholarships, mentoring and support for staff undertaking higher degrees and graduate certificates in higher education (teaching and learning), all of which have been implemented (section 3.2.1). Students are introduced to research methods within their courses.

A Campus Register, which is reviewed by management every trimester, records the scholarly and creative output for each campus. As well as matters such as continuous improvement and complaints, the Register tracks industry practice, professional development, and creative and industry practice.

Because of the nature of the fields in which SAE Institute operates, it is important for many staff to engage in the development of live events and creative media as well as more traditional academic forms of scholarship. However, in order to deliver courses at a higher education level it is also necessary to progressively develop an environment in which practice takes place within a context of high-level reflection, and scholarship is integrated within the curricula.

Affirmation 11

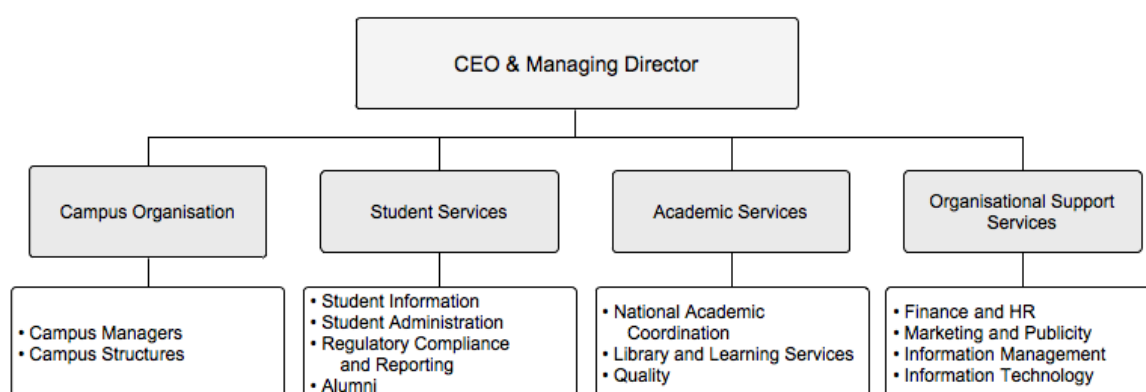
SAE Institute's development of appropriate forms of scholarship and integration of scholarship within the curricula is affirmed.

3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.1 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND DECISION MAKING

The framework of internal decision making within SAE Institute has been largely described and discussed earlier in this Report, especially as it relates to academic governance.

The organisational structure is summarised in the Portfolio in the following chart:



While the Campus Managers report directly to the CEO, the Campus Academic Coordinators report to both the Campus Manager and the National Academic Coordinator, who is also the Head of Academic Services. The Campus Managers have each been allotted responsibility for a national function, so for example the Sydney Campus Manager is responsible for information systems across the whole of SAE Institute, and the Melbourne Campus Manager for information technology and the network.

The most senior managers meet regularly, and the 'Senior Group' comprises the CEO, Campus Managers, the Head of Student Services, the Head of Academic Services, and the Head of Finance and Human Resources. Minutes of the group's 2010 and 2011 meetings are increasingly organised so as to cover major areas such as: the introduction of new policies and procedures; new academic initiatives; marketing, business planning and financial performance; organisational restructures; academic issues such as the admissions discussion paper; and issues to do with organisation support and student services.

Historically, SAE Institute has been organised very much on a campus-by-campus basis, which could lead to inconsistencies between campuses. However, the new matrix structure, while complex, appears to be effective in finding the right balance between local autonomy and national consistency.

3.2 ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

SAE Institute has a suite of policies in place to cover the major areas of Human Resources:

- staff recruitment and induction
- staff development
- staff performance review.

Many of the policies in these areas, and the practices that lie beneath them, are similar in nature to those of other higher education institutions.

3.2.1 Staff Development

SAE Institute demonstrates an outstanding commitment to staff development. On undertaking the strategic move from the VET sector to the higher education sector, SAE Institute realised the need to assist continuing academic staff to make the transition from VET-style teaching to an approach more appropriate for higher education (as well as the need to recruit staff with higher education capability), and approved the paper on strategic staff development mentioned earlier (section 2.5).

All academic staff teaching in degree courses are able to attend two-day workshops on the topics 'Orientation and Induction to Higher Education' and 'Assessment in Higher Education'. In addition, academic staff have been encouraged to enrol in the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Teaching and Learning) offered by Southern Cross University, and provided with time release for their study. Time release and scholarships are also provided to support staff undertaking higher degrees. Staff members confirm that opportunities for staff development are made available to them and that they are benefiting from these opportunities.

Commendation 8

SAE Institute is commended for its commitment to, and effective implementation of, staff development, especially in making the transition from vocational education and training to higher education course delivery.

SAE Institute also has a staff mentoring scheme, which was piloted at the Perth campus and was commended by an accreditation panel of the Western Australian Government.

Part-time and sessional members of staff feel fully included in campus operations and activities. They have equal access to staff development opportunities, are financially compensated for additional activities beyond contact time and assessment marking, and are included in the collegial dialogue about unit and course improvement. SAE Institute exhibits very good practice through its high level of inclusion of casual staff members.

Commendation 9

SAE Institute is commended for ensuring that part-time and sessional staff members are fully included in campus operations and activities and in collegial dialogue about the courses they teach.

3.3 SUPPORT AND STUDENT LEARNING

The Student Services Strategic Plan 2010–2014 is guiding the further development of services and the work of the Student Services Advisers and other staff. SAE Institute has identified the following services as the minimum requirements to be provided at each campus with no additional fees for the student:

- academic support
- career and alumni services
- IT and laboratory support

- assistance for students with disabilities
- library services
- personal assistance and counselling (students needing specialised assistance may be referred to an approved off-site service).

3.3.1 Academic Support

A consistent model for orientation is being deployed across all campuses as an outcome of SAE Institute's self-review for this audit. A diagnostic Language, Literacy and Numeracy test is administered during the orientation program before the beginning of each course, and is used to identify any specific learning needs for each student at the outset. Workshops and classes have been organised at some campuses, and learning resources are made available through the Library. SAE Institute is also considering establishing a foundation program.

As the student body grows, it seems likely that the number of students needing assistance with academic skills will exceed the capacity of staff to make individual arrangements, and the Panel was informed that SAE Institute was investigating ways of accessing academic support programs that are well established within the pathways colleges in the Navitas group.

Affirmation 12

SAE Institute's exploration of ways to make academic support programs available for its students from within the Navitas group is affirmed.

Types of support organised by the Campus Academic Coordinators include:

- units on study skills within the curricula
- additional classes scheduled as required by the unit lecturer/coordinator
- one-on-one tutorial support provided by the unit lecturer/coordinator or a nominated tutor
- studio technicians who provide technical and practical support
- support from student or staff mentors
- language, literacy and numeracy support.

The libraries on each campus also make available a range of study skills materials and learning resources, and library staff are available to assist students to access resources and provide advice on study skills.

The Student Services Advisers themselves may organise other types of support (either on an individual or group basis) including:

- study skills training and life skills counselling
- course planning and time management support
- referral to other forms of specialist support, such as counselling.

SAE Institute's self-review identified the need to formalise a more systematic process of identifying students at risk of failure, and a Students at Risk procedure was developed to guide the Campus Academic Co-ordinators, other academic staff members and the Student Services Advisers.

The immediate availability of student support is affected in the cities where SAE Institute, Qantm College and support staff are located in different buildings. However, SAE Institute plans to progressively co-locate SAE and Qantm courses, and the Melbourne

campus has pioneered this model, in which all students have the same access to support in the same building.

SAE Institute plans to continue branding SAE and Qantm courses separately, due to the very different nature of the students that are attracted to the different fields. Cultural differences between the 'tribes' will therefore persist, but this is not inappropriate—and is probably inevitable given the different types of students attracted to the different fields—provided both student cohorts have ready access to the support services they need.

3.3.2 Facilities and Equipment

The technological disciplines taught at SAE Institute require access to high-end studios so that students can put into practice what they learn. It is evident that SAE Institute has invested heavily in equipment for course delivery, especially digital consoles and digital audio workstations in the audio courses, including surround sound technologies. In film courses, high-definition digital cameras are deployed, with all editing being undertaken on digital workstations. The Audit Panel inspected many studios in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, which have consoles at various levels of sophistication corresponding to the progressive levels of the courses. The audio studios have been internally benchmarked against the studios at the Cologne campus of SAE Global, which have been externally reviewed and found to be very satisfactory.

SAE Institute has alliances with various equipment suppliers, including AMS-Neve (audio equipment) and Apple (computers), and with the recording studio group Studios 301.

SAE Institute also trains students in the use of cutting edge animation software, games authoring platforms and emerging 3D technologies.

Commendation 10

SAE Institute is commended for the current level of facilities and equipment provided for student learning at the Institute.

Some students indicated that the growth in student numbers is placing pressure on access to facilities such as audio studios. However, SAE Institute is building more studios on some campuses.

Affirmation 13

SAE Institute's continuing expansion of facilities and equipment in line with growing student numbers is affirmed.

3.4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

3.4.1 Information Technology Infrastructure

SAE Institute needs high-level IT infrastructure to deliver its courses.

An external review of the IT infrastructure at SAE Institute was completed in September 2010. The review report was partly based on a user survey and contained 22 recommendations for improvement, including recommendations that SAE Institute:

- establish a suitable IT governance structure
- improve communication of IT issues
- establish a formal approval process for IT policies and procedures
- address the significant network performance problems being experienced at that time
- procure further network storage and backup systems

- invest in further wireless access points
- improve email for staff and students
- consider the procurement of a suitable learning management system.

SAE Institute has moved rather quickly to implement these recommendations, and significant improvements to the management of IT and to the network itself have been implemented. A standard operating environment has been fully deployed throughout the organisation, the data centre in Sydney has been expanded and wireless networks have been improved on all campuses.

There are nearly 1000 high-end computers available in laboratories across the network for students. SAE Institute is transitioning these into a two- to three-years lifecycle, so that no student machine will be more than 36 months old by February 2012.

SAE Institute has used a web-based course administration system (CAS) since 2009, originally developed by SAE Global in Germany. The external review of IT found serious deficiencies in CAS, which it found was a 'hot topic' for staff. The survey of users showed a rating of average or below average for all areas of functionality except enrolment. The external review of IT identified a need to adapt CAS to be able to produce effective records and reporting for the Australian regulatory authorities. Additional resources have since been directed by SAE Institute to improving CAS.

SAE Institute plans to re-run the user survey from the external review of IT later this year, about a year after the first survey, to see if the improvements implemented so far have resulted in an increase in user satisfaction.

Further development of the IT infrastructure, including CAS, will be affected by the planned integration of SAE Institute's IT infrastructure into the Navitas IT infrastructure.

Affirmation 14

SAE Institute's continuing implementation of the recommendations of its external review of IT infrastructure is affirmed.

3.4.2 Information Resources

Each campus has a library and learning centre which includes computers for students to use, and provides access to online resources, journals and audiovisual resources. Orientation sessions are provided for new students as well as further information literacy training during their courses.

SAE Institute has invested significant resources over recent years in upgrading its libraries, and both students and staff commented very favourably on the improvement in the libraries over this period. The libraries at Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Dubai doubled in size during 2010. While expenditure on acquisitions and salaries is below that of universities it compares favourably with the NSA-HEP sector, and has been identified for further improvement in the future. A new budget model, being introduced in 2011, will use a formula to link expenditure on library resources with student numbers. Collection development is a priority for 2011.

Commendation 11

SAE Institute is commended for the significant improvement in library resources over recent years, and is encouraged to continue on this trajectory.

3.4.3 Flexible Delivery

Most courses at SAE Institute are taught face-to-face, ranging from large lectures and laboratory classes to small studio-based practice. However, the Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Plan includes a strategy to 'develop and review units for flexible delivery'.

Academic managers and staff expressed caution about providing courses solely through online delivery, given the nature of the disciplines taught at SAE Institute, especially audio and film, which require a lot of 'hands on' work in studios.

SAE Institute is piloting the use of Moodle™ to enable flexible delivery of course materials and to enable students to access course materials from outside the SAE Institute intranet.

The Panel observes that SAE Institute's caution is well founded, and that development of flexible learning needs to be well planned and resourced, as recommended in SAE Institute's external review of IT, and undertaken only in units that are suited for flexible delivery.

Affirmation 15

SAE Institute's cautious development of selected units for flexible delivery and the development of a capability to provide course materials to students externally are affirmed.

4 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

4.1 RECAPITULATION

Many aspects of SAE Institute's approach to quality improvement have been mentioned in sections of this Report dealing with governance, teaching and learning, and learning support.

The following sections provide comment on the overarching organisational quality systems.

4.2 THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

SAE Institute has a quality framework based on the PIMRI (Plan-Implement-Monitor-Review-Improve) model. Staff who were interviewed showed familiarity with the model.

As described in section 2, SAE Institute has a well-developed system of surveys to gain feedback about course and unit quality. Quantitative feedback from students is supplemented by qualitative feedback through the Boards of Studies and from Program Advisory Committees. It is evident that SAE Institute takes action in response to negative feedback and makes adjustments to curricula and delivery (usually at the unit level), or provides counselling to teachers where individual teachers' performance is an issue.

SAE Institute has started to improve the reporting upwards of academic performance data to the Academic Board, which will facilitate the identification of trends and opportunities for improvement at the organisation or course level.

4.3 BENCHMARKING

SAE Institute has adopted an overall framework for benchmarking and has undertaken a number of noteworthy benchmarking exercises recently.

SAE took part in a benchmarking project conducted by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training in 2010, which showed that it had a favourable staff-to-student ratio compared with the other higher education institutions that participated.

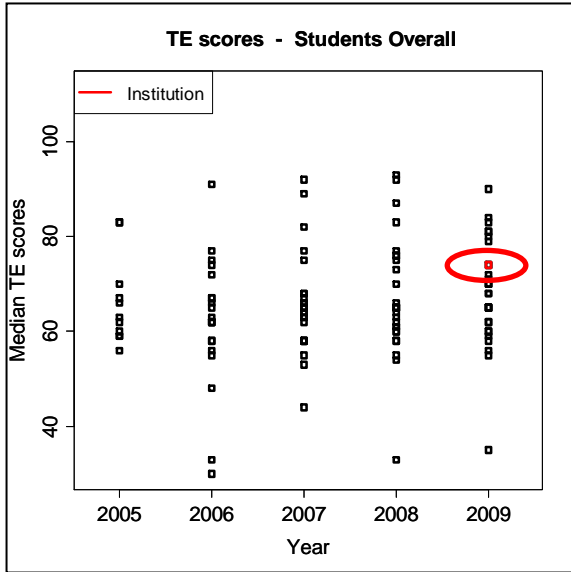
Also during 2010, SAE Institute undertook a thorough benchmarking of its student services with Southern Institute of Technology (New Zealand) and a report was prepared for consideration by the Senior Group.

SAE Institute also conducted a desk benchmarking of 15 key performance indicators (including 11 SAE Institute strategic priorities) with the University of Canberra. This exercise revealed that SAE Institute had made progress with its strategic priorities and external moderation of student assessment. SAE Institute does not have an employer satisfaction survey equivalent to that of the University of Canberra, but has very substantial qualitative feedback from industry through the Program Advisory Committees and the Academic Board.

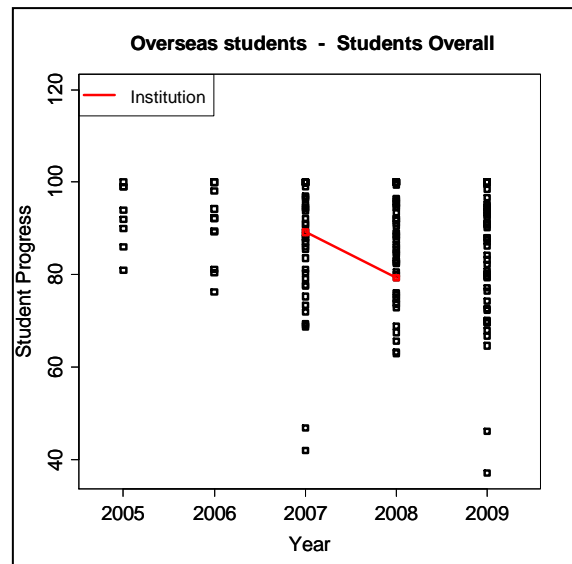
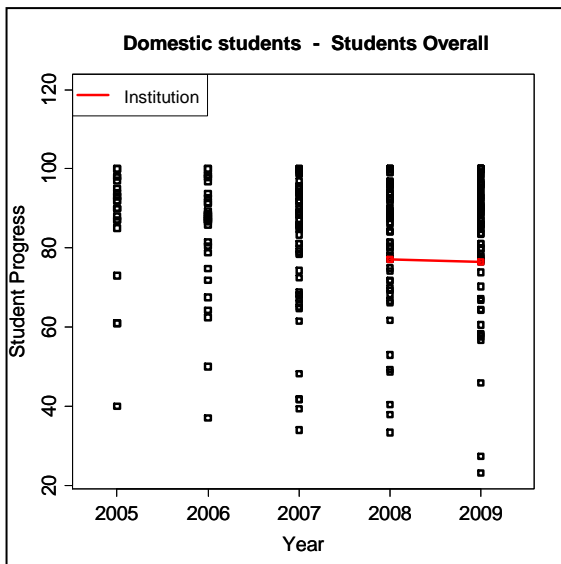
5 DATA

In all the following charts, data for SAE Institute or Qantm College courses is compared with data for the NSA-HEP sector overall (Students Overall). Data is from DEEWR and draws on analyses undertaken by AUQA.

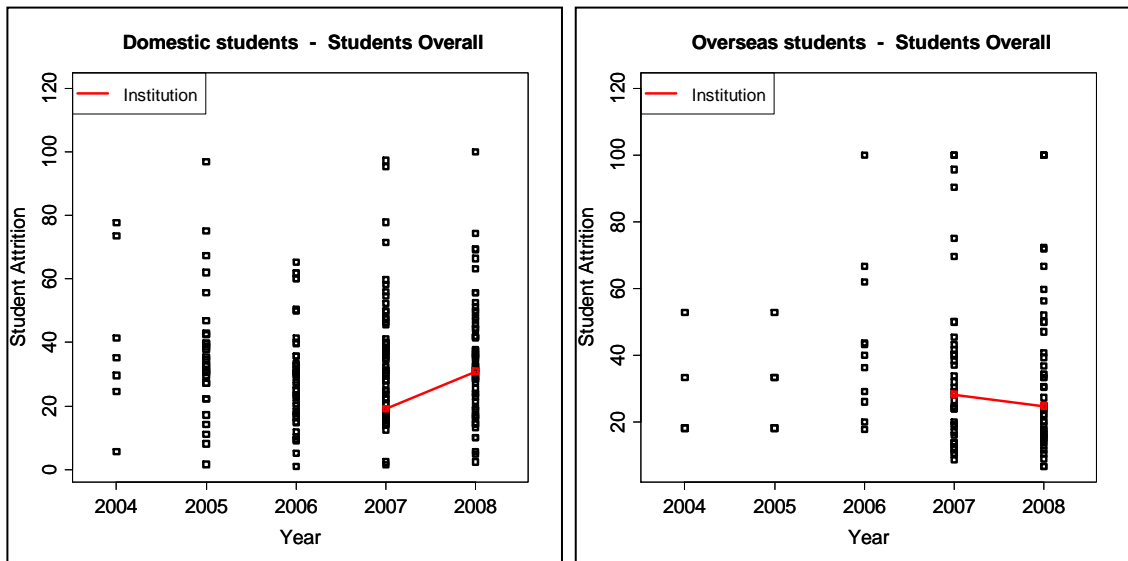
ITEM 5.1: SAE TE SCORES



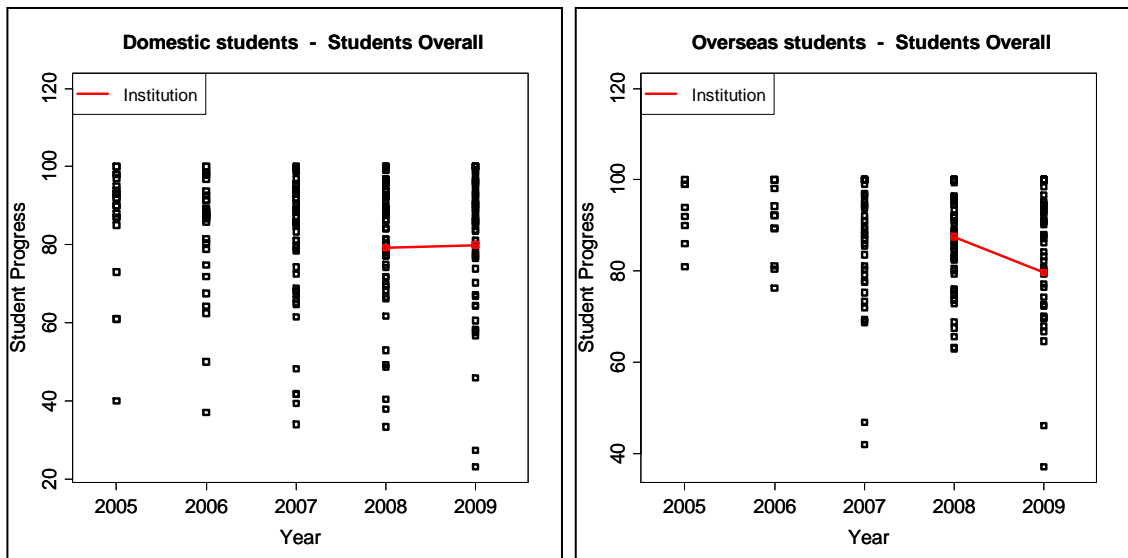
ITEM 5.2: SAE PROGRESS RATES – DOMESTIC STUDENTS AND OVERSEAS STUDENTS



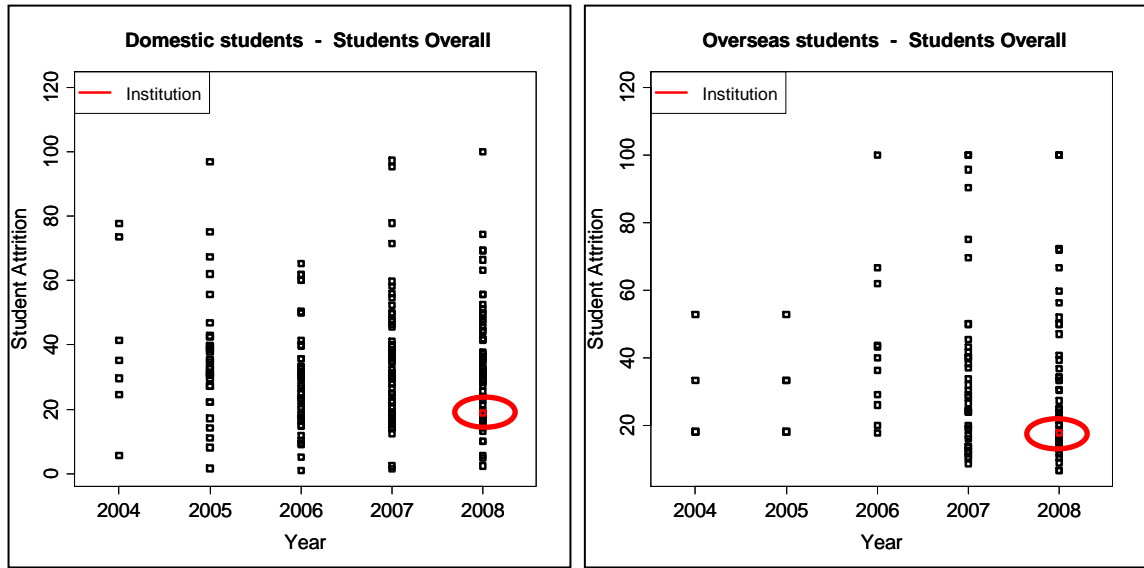
ITEM 5.3: SAE ATTRITION RATES – DOMESTIC STUDENTS AND OVERSEAS STUDENTS



ITEM 5.4: QANTM PROGRESS RATES – DOMESTIC STUDENTS AND OVERSEAS STUDENTS



ITEM 5.5: QANTM ATTRITION RATES – DOMESTIC STUDENTS AND OVERSEAS STUDENTS



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAE INSTITUTE PTY LIMITED

Appendix A was supplied by SAE Institute Pty Limited for the purpose of this Audit Report.

History and Locations

The School of Audio Engineering (SAE) was founded in 1976 in Sydney, offering post-secondary courses in audio engineering and production. From its origins in vocational education it has developed as a quality-assured academic institution, with a strong tradition of practical application and industry recognition.

In 2005, SAE Institute bought Qantm College from the Queensland Government. Qantm College was originally established in Queensland in 1996 by leading Queensland universities and various government agencies as part of the Commonwealth Government's Collaborative Multimedia Centres Program, to provide the highest quality interactive media education through creative media degrees. The Institute has therefore inherited a strong commitment to higher education values and culture through the Qantm College acquisition.

In 2004, SAE Institute's first degree course (a Bachelor of Digital Media) was introduced at the Byron Bay campus. Subsequently in 2007 the course was reviewed and reconfigured into two degree courses, the Bachelor of Audio Production and the Bachelor of Film Production. Both courses were accredited in New South Wales.

Within Australia, SAE Institute currently has five campuses that offer higher education (degree centres), plus a campus in Dubai offering the two SAE degrees accredited through New South Wales.

The change of focus to degree level courses has been highly successful, with higher education enrolments expanding from 1017 enrolments in 2008 to 2665 in 2010 in Australia (total EFTSL of 1504).

During 2009 SAE Institute and Qantm College were merged to form one company, the SAE Institute Pty. Ltd, Australia, formally completed in 2010. The Institute has retained the distinctive SAE and Qantm brands that offer different kinds of media courses. SAE Institute intends to maintain the two brands, while utilising synergies of process and administrative efficiencies and where possible, bringing both brands together in a common campus, with Melbourne being the first example of this as completed in 2010.

Academic Profile

Current Higher Education Courses						
Course	Brisbane	Byron Bay	Melbourne	Sydney	Perth	Dubai
Bachelor of Audio Production		•	•	•	•	•
Bachelor of Film Production		•	•	•	•	•
Bachelor of Interactive Entertainment with majors in: animation, games design, games programming	•		•	•	•	
Bachelor of Creative Media with majors in graphic design and interactive media	•		•	•	•	

2010 Higher Education Enrolments		
Total Higher Education	2805	
Location	Higher Education	
	SAE Institute	Qantm College
Brisbane		479
Byron Bay	442	
Sydney (two campuses)	539	289
Melbourne (joint campus)	434	262
Perth	220	
Dubai	140	

APPENDIX B: THE AUDIT PANEL

Mr Gary Thomas, Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services), La Trobe University

Professor Ron Oliver, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Edith Cowan University (Chair)

Dr Michael Tomlinson, Director, Regulation and Quality Assurance, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Observer:

Mr Hoang Minh Do, PhD student, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following abbreviations and definitions are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
CAC	Campus Academic Coordinator
CAS	course administration system
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
DEEWR	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL	equivalent full-time student load
FEE-HELP	FEE-HELP is a loan given to eligible fee-paying students to help pay part or all of their tuition fees
HEP(s)	higher education provider(s)
HESA	<i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i>
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IT	information technology
KPI	key performance indicator
MCEECDYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (established on 1 July 2009)
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now disbanded)
Moodle™	proprietary brand electronic information management platform
National Protocols	<i>National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>
NSA-HEP(s)	non self-accrediting higher education provider(s)
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
PAC(s)	Program Advisory Committee(s)
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio	Performance Portfolio
QAFs	quality audit factors
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency (UK)
TE	tertiary entrance (score)
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
VET	vocational education and training

