

Overview of Curriculum Diagnostic

Introduction

The curriculum diagnostic is a central component of Murdoch University's internal quality assurance processes and continuous improvement framework and affects all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework courses. Besides this internal driver, there is also external impetus in that having such a process is a requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework to which Murdoch must adhere to ensure it maintains registration with the higher education regulator, TEQSA. Additionally, the demonstration of a regular cycle of curriculum review is a frequent requirement of bodies that accredit the University's professional courses.

The curriculum diagnostic gives schools the opportunity to review periodically their course offerings in the light of a rapidly changing environment with the intention of identifying areas for improvement. Courses are examined using institutional data and recommendations made on how they can be better designed to meet the needs of students and industry in a competitive market. A course re-design phase, in which the recommendations are implemented, usually follows the diagnostic process. Redesigned courses then follow the usual channels leading to formal approval through the appropriate governance committees.

Higher Education Standards

The domain of Institutional Quality Assurance within the Higher Education Standards Framework clearly outlines the need to review curriculum, what such a review would entail and how the results should be used.

5.3	Monitoring, Review and Improvement
5.3.1	All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.
5.3.2	A comprehensive review includes the design and content of each course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods of assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.
5.3.4	Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including: a. analysis of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates, and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and b. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.
5.3.7	The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

Curriculum Policy

Reference to the curriculum diagnostic can be found in Murdoch's Curriculum Policy. It is critical to the Review and Assurance phase of curriculum management.

5.2.5	Review and Assurance
5.2.5.1	The review and assurance phase involves the periodic substantive evaluation of the curriculum against academic, market and viability criteria, in the form of a Curriculum Diagnostic.
5.2.5.2	The processes of this phase include analysis of both internal and external data and an assessment of curriculum performance with reference to relevant benchmarks and comparators.
5.2.5.3	Through the process of review, curriculum owners are supported by the professional services in the interpretation of available data and depending on the particular issues identified, would be assisted in undertaking more detailed analysis
5.2.5.4	The input of external academic and industry reviewers, students and alumni are sought during the process of curriculum review and assurance.

Curriculum Diagnostic Process

The overarching purpose of the curriculum diagnostic is to consider the future of the course under review with a view to one of three outcomes:

- To continue to offer the course and/or majors unchanged
- To discontinue the course or majors
- To make revisions to the existing curriculum through a re-design process

The opportunity to recommend the development of a totally new offering in the discipline is also available as a result of a curriculum diagnostic.

As a process the curriculum diagnostic uses:

- School-led decision making that aligns with the University's strategic direction
- Disciplinary leadership
- Informed, inclusive and transparent decision making
- Improved emphasis on curriculum design and the student experience
- Swift processes for review, design and implementation

The basic tenets of a curriculum diagnostic process are:

- University supported diagnostic activity
- The right people in one place at the same time
- Quality, sustainable, viable curriculum for now and into the future

There are three core activities undertaken by a diagnostic panel:

- Analyse available data related to several themes
- Record observations around the data presented
- Make recommendations about the course based on the observation

The inputs to the curriculum diagnostic include:

- Institutional data and reports from various sources
- Discipline expertise from academic staff
- External perspective from industry
- Consumer perspective from students

The outputs of the curriculum diagnostic include:

- A range of relevant factors evaluated
- Questions and constraints articulated
- Tangible and actionable recommendations formed
- Parameters for design established
- Clear priorities and timeframes set

The curriculum diagnostic process is further outlined in the *Curriculum Diagnostic Procedure*, which is linked to the *Curriculum Policy*. It covers details such as:

- Scheduling of courses for review
- Composition of diagnostic panels
- Processes for developing diagnostic reports
- Reporting on the findings of diagnostic reports

Curriculum Diagnostic Themes

The curriculum diagnostic focuses on eight themes located under two broad areas of interest.

Area of Interest	Themes	Intention
Performance and Alignment	Strategic Alignment	To consider how the course might be better positioned to align with Murdoch University's current strategic plan
	Viability and Load	To examine financial, load and demographic data for insights into any issues that could impact on course viability now and into the future
	Market and Positioning	To examine current and future markets with the goal of better positioning the course to capture a new and larger market into the future
	Graduate Destinations and Outcomes	To compare the outcomes for graduates of the course to those of competitor universities and consider if they could be improved
Learning and Teaching	Course Design	To consider if the course could be redesigned to provide better learning outcomes and career opportunities for graduates
	Quality, Standards and Compliance	To consider if changes could be made to enhance the quality of the course and the overall student experience within a standards framework
	People, Capacity and Capability	To consider any issues in relation to staffing that might impact on the ability of the school to offer the course into the future
	Technology and Environments	To consider the learning environment within which the course is taught and if changes might be needed to enhance the student experience