

Program and Course Accreditation Policy

Responsible Officer:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Designated Officer:	Executive Officer: Learning, Teaching and Research
Council Approval:	Council C03/47, 12 August 2003
Last Amended:	
Related Policies:	
Attachment:	Program and Course Accreditation Flowcharts

Overview

As a self-accrediting institution, the University accredits its award programs and courses through the University Council. Accreditation of programs and courses is a form of peer review that plays a major role in assuring the quality of learning and teaching in the University.

Policy

1. International Standards

- 1.1 The University of the Sunshine Coast pursues international standards of excellence in learning and teaching. In conformity with the University Act and to help achieve these standards, the Council and the Academic Board accredit the University's award programs and courses.

2. Accreditation Criteria

- 2.1 Accreditation of programs and courses requires effective curriculum design, such as appropriate breadth, depth, coherence, relevance and currency of content and methods.
- 2.2 Accreditation also requires evidence of sufficient demand to warrant proposed programs and courses, evidence that the University has the necessary resources to sustain provision of proposed programs and courses, and evidence that they contribute to the University's strategic aims in learning and teaching.

3. Reaccreditation and Discontinuation

- 3.1 Programs are accredited for five years. After five years, programs may be reaccredited on a five-yearly basis, or discontinued. In exceptional circumstances, programs may be subject to a reaccreditation process in less than five years.
- 3.2 Courses are accredited indefinitely and may be discontinued at the request of a Dean.

4. Program and Course Changes

- 4.1 Programs and courses can be changed during their period of accreditation.
- 4.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor determines whether proposed changes are substantial or administrative.
- 4.3 The outcome of proposals for substantial changes to programs or course that are likely to affect students' experience of programs or courses are determined by the Academic Board.
- 4.4 The outcome of proposals for administrative changes to programs or course that are unlikely to have a significant affect on students' experience of programs or courses are determined by Deans.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The University Council

- 5.1.1 The University Council determines the outcome of proposals to accredit programs that involve the entry of the University into a discipline not currently taught in the University and proposals for new programs in existing disciplines but at a higher academic level.
- 5.1.2 The University Council also determines the outcomes of proposals to discontinue programs.

5.2 The Academic Board

- 5.2.1 The Academic Board makes recommendations to the University Council on proposals to accredit programs that involve the entry of the University into a discipline not currently taught in the University and proposals for new programs in existing disciplines but at a higher academic level.
- 5.2.2 The Academic Board, under delegation from the University Council, determines the outcomes of proposals for the accreditation and reaccreditation of programs, and the accreditation of courses, that do not take the University into new disciplines or higher academic levels of existing disciplines.
- 5.2.3 The Academic Board determines the outcomes of proposals to make substantial changes to programs and courses.
- 5.2.4 The Academic Board makes recommendations to the University Council on proposals to discontinue programs.

5.3 The Learning and Teaching Management Committee

- 5.3.1 The Learning and Teaching Management Committee makes recommendations to the Academic Board on proposals for the accreditation and reaccreditation of all programs, the accreditation of all courses, substantial changes to programs and courses, and discontinuation of programs and courses.

5.4 Faculty Program Advisory Committees

- 5.4.1 Faculty Program Advisory Committees provide advice to the Academic Board on proposals for the accreditation, reaccreditation and discontinuation of programs and courses.

5.5 Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees

- 5.5.1 On behalf of Deans, faculty learning and teaching committees develop accreditation and reaccreditation proposals for programs, accreditation proposals for courses, proposals for changes to programs and courses, and proposals for discontinuation of programs and courses.
- 5.5.2 Joint meetings of relevant faculty learning and teaching committees develop proposals for accreditation, reaccreditation and changes to combined degree programs.

5.6 Deputy Vice-Chancellor

- 5.6.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the implementation of program and course accreditation on behalf of the University. This includes making and communicating judgements about the extent to which proposals meet accreditation criteria.

5.7 Deans

- 5.7.1 Deans are responsible for the implementation of program and course accreditation at faculty level and for assisting the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in this at University level. This includes making and communicating judgements about the extent to which proposals meet accreditation criteria.

Program Accreditation Process

Draft Flowcharts

Seven versions of the accreditation process are given:

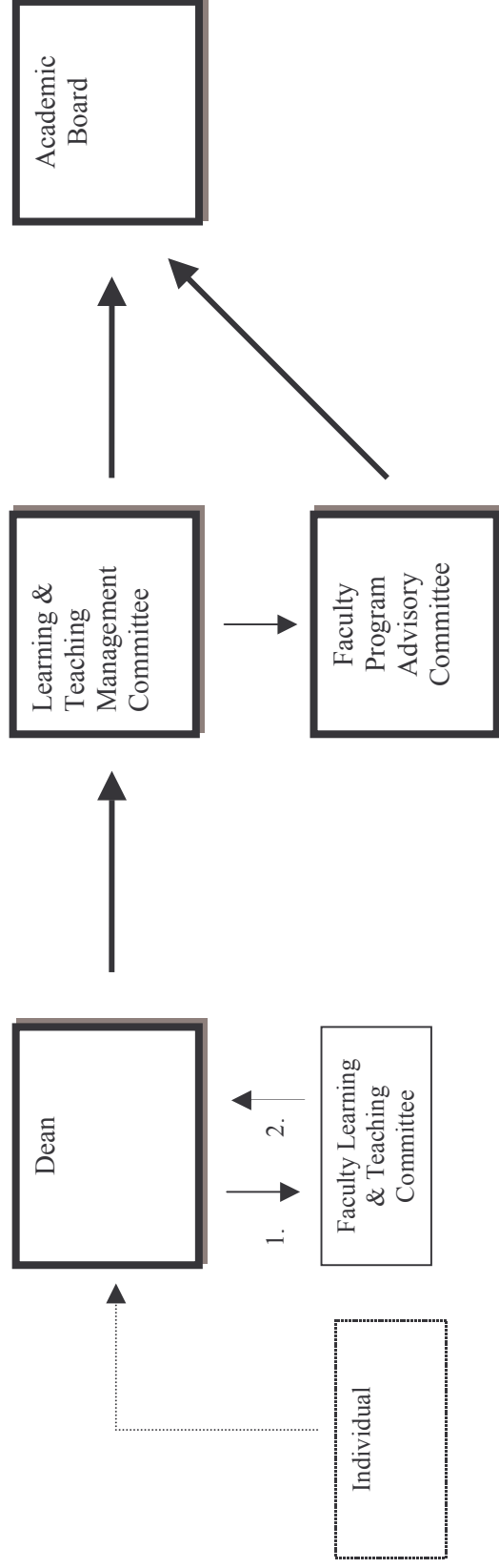
1. Program (summary)
2. Program (complete)
3. New Course (summary)
4. New Course (complete)
5. Expedited (programs)
6. Program Reaccreditation
7. Administrative and substantial changes (courses and programs)

Abbreviations

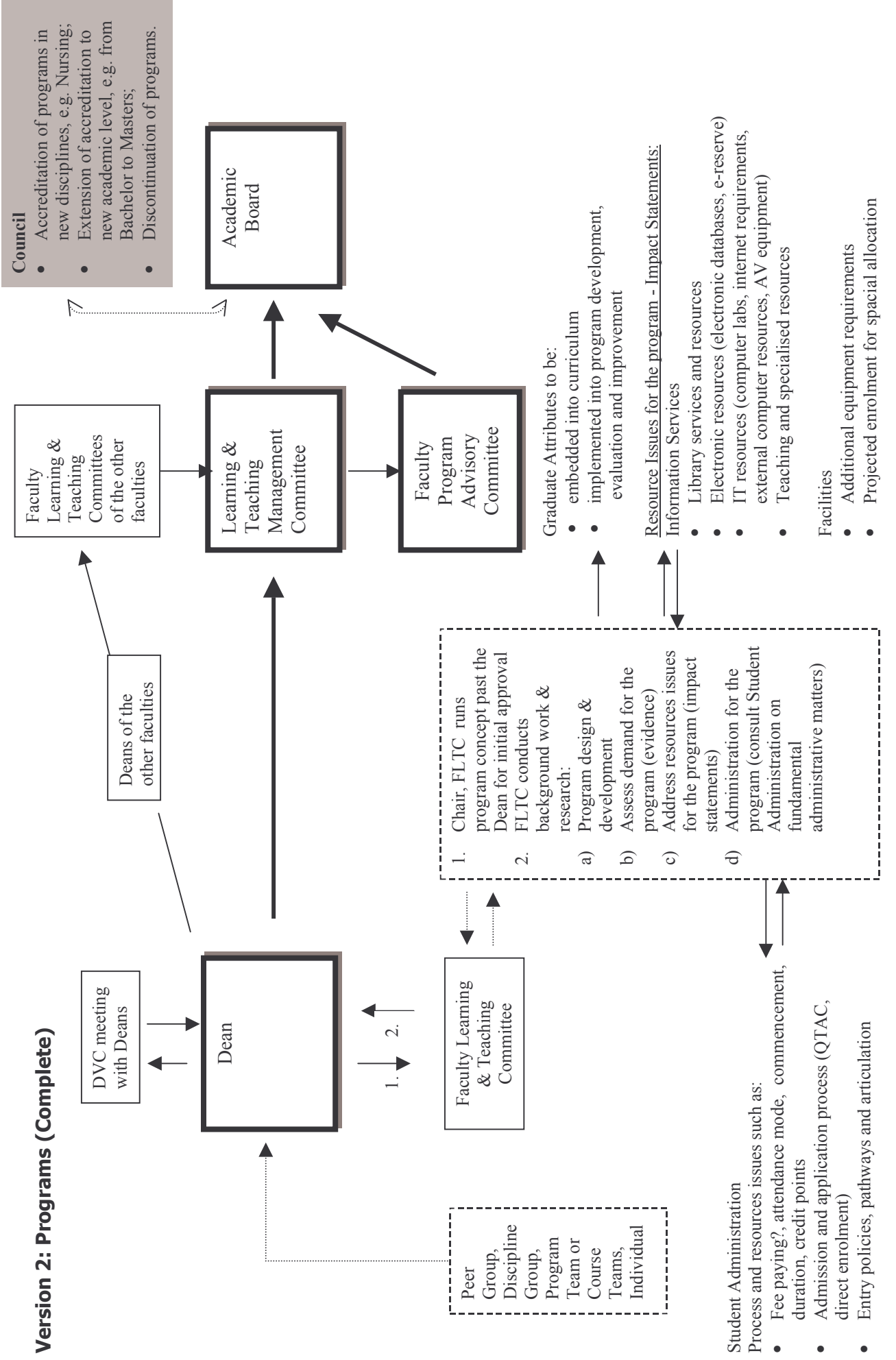
- DVC Deputy Vice-Chancellor
 EO:LTR Executive Officer: Learning, Teaching & Research
 FAC Faculty Advisory Committee
 FLTC Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee (has core & varying membership)
 LTMC Learning & Teaching Management Committee

- Aims**
1. To establish a more systematic process (standardised, templates, logical sequence)
 2. To improve efficiency (user-friendly, timely)
 3. To improve flexibility
 4. To restore ownership to where it belongs (academics, coordination with Student Administration)
 5. To provide good service

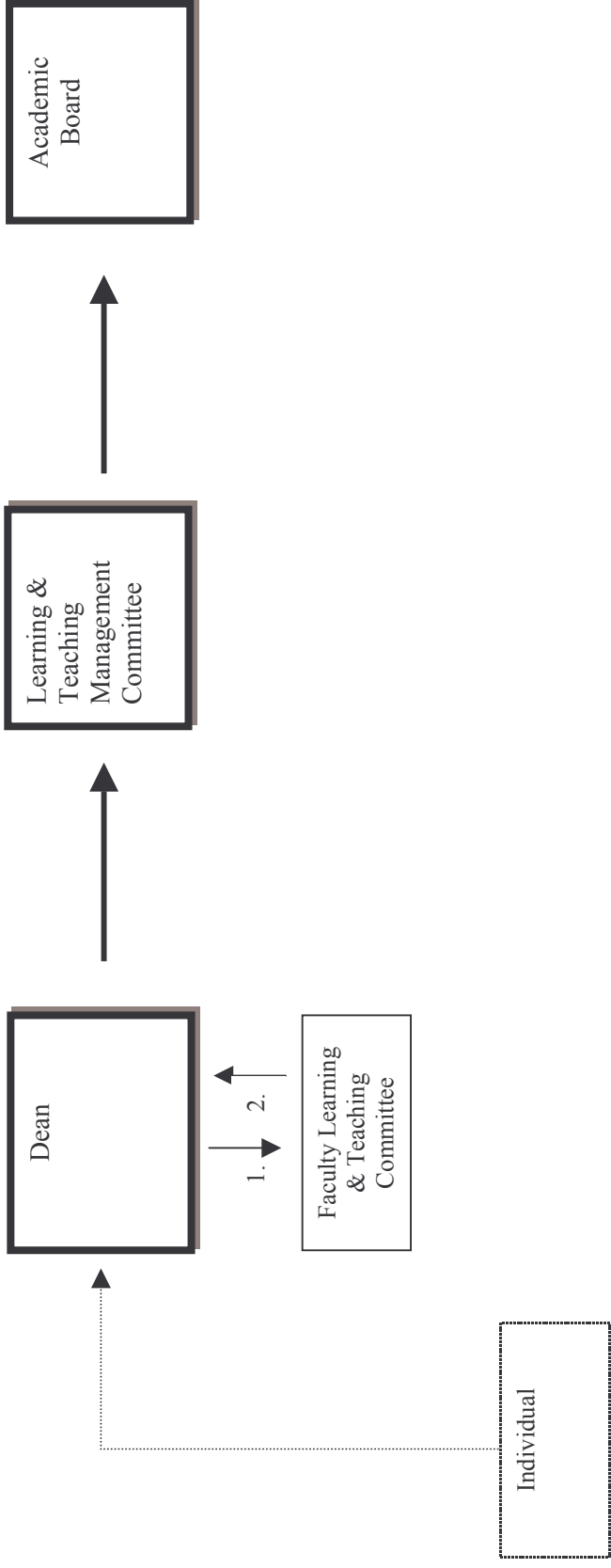
Version 1: Programs (summary)



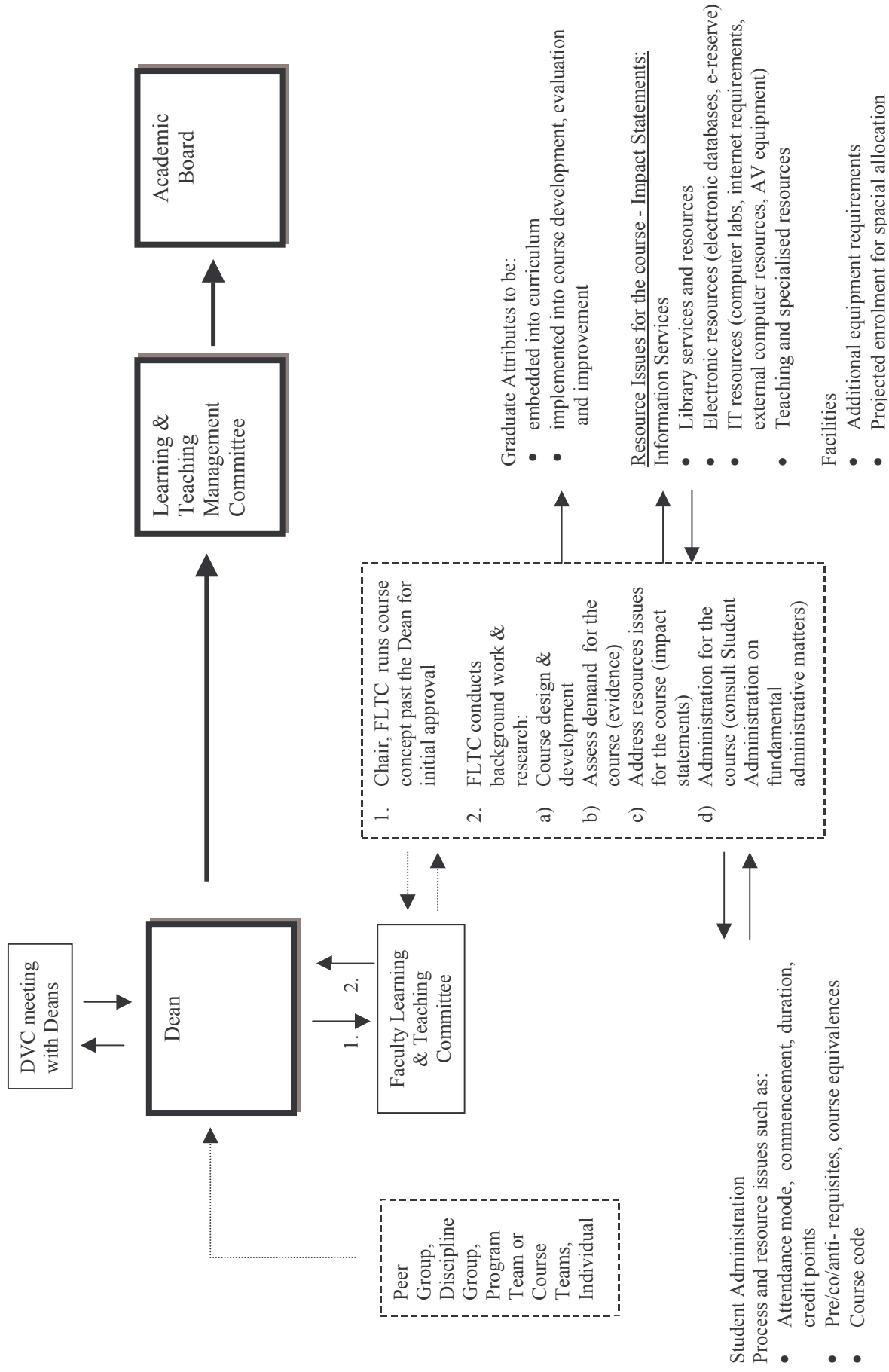
Version 2: Programs (Complete)



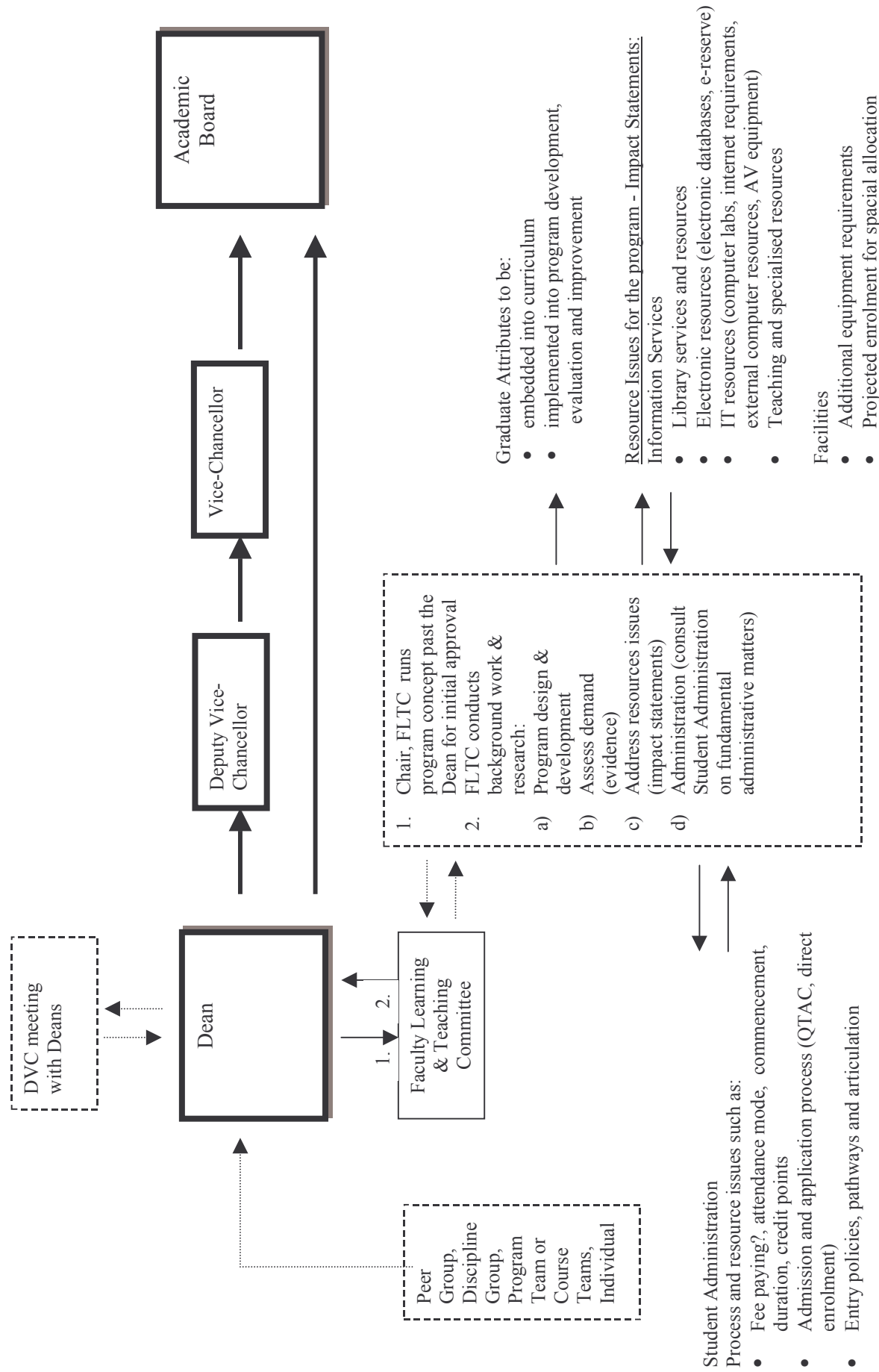
Version 3: New Courses (summary)



Version 4: New Courses (complete)



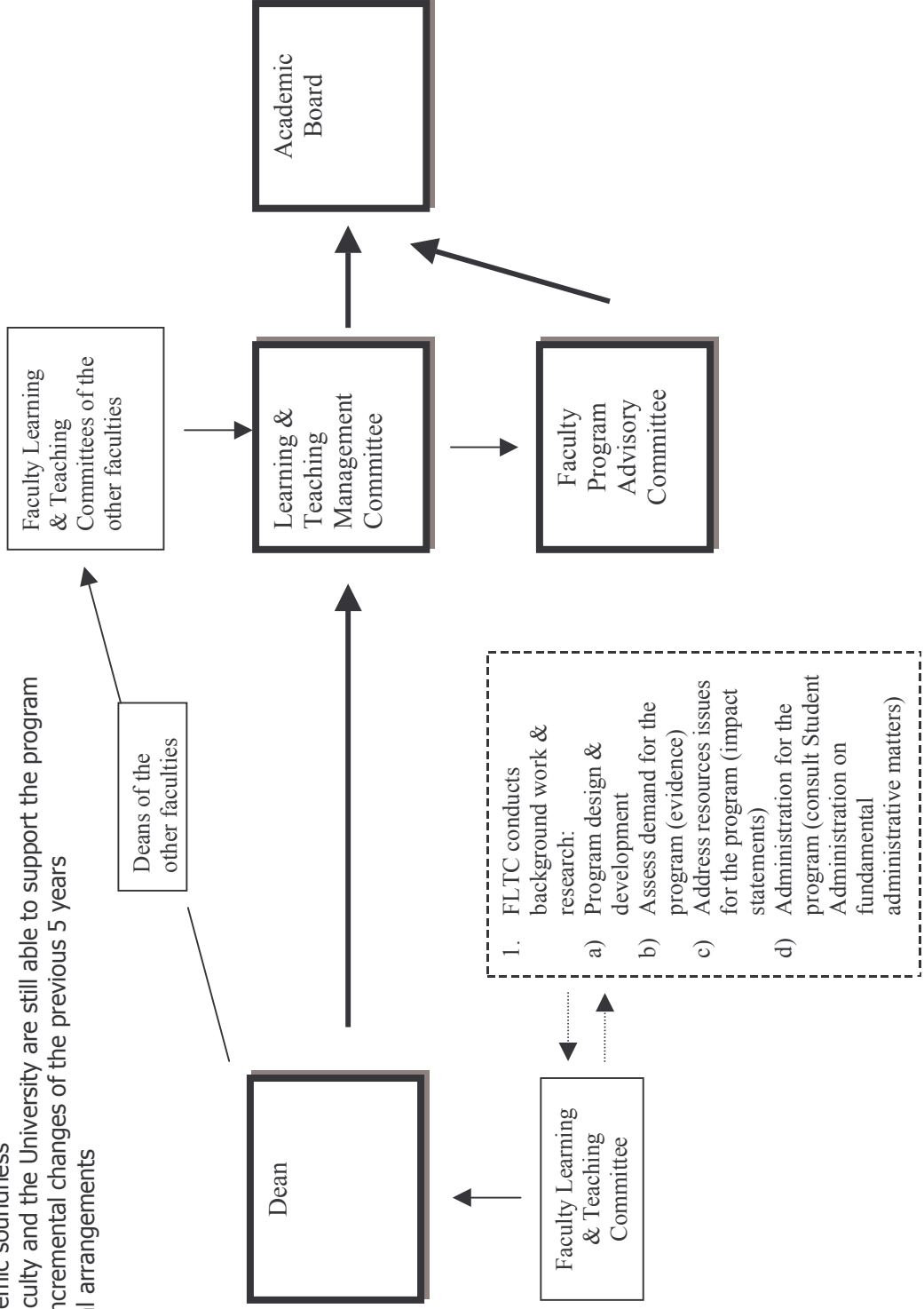
Version 5: Expedited (programs)



Version 6: Program Reaccreditation

Purpose:

- a) to decide whether to continue the program
- b) to check basic academic soundness
- c) to check that the faculty and the University are still able to support the program
- d) to consolidate the incremental changes of the previous 5 years
- e) to check operational arrangements



Version 7: Administrative and Substantial Changes (courses and programs)

Procedure

All proposed changes to programs and courses will be the subject of a succinct initial description that is submitted to the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for a timely decision about whether the proposed changes are administrative or substantial (see definitions below). Administrative changes will be made expeditiously on the authority of the Dean whereas substantial changes will be forwarded to Academic Board via the Learning and Teaching Management Committee.

Definitions

Substantial changes include such things as:

1. The change has an impact on another faculty
2. The change has an impact on another program
3. The change has an impact on content
4. The change has an impact on learning and assessment tasks
5. The change has an impact on mode of delivery

That is, changes that do make a difference to the basic academic qualities of the program or course

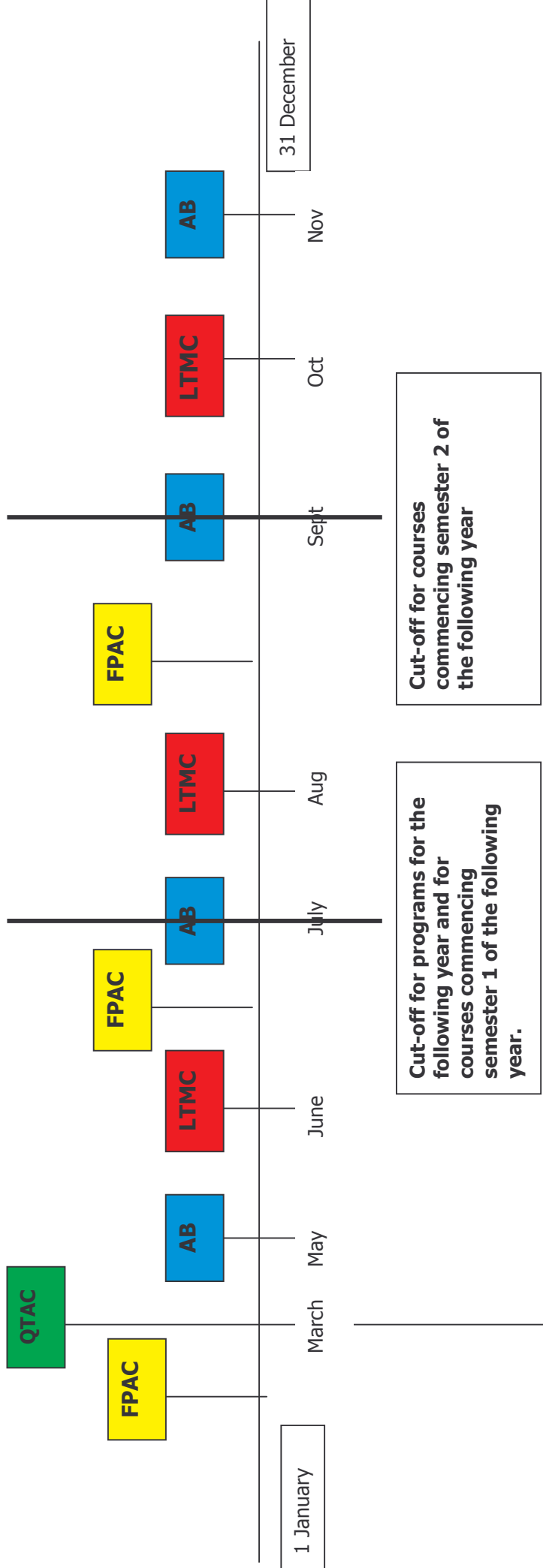
Administrative changes include such things as:

- Change to textbook, references, software or laboratory use
- Change of title of program or course
- Updating or fine-tuning of objectives
- Updating or fine-tuning of content
- Updating or fine-tuning of learning and assessment tasks

That is, changes that make little, if any, difference to the basic academic qualities of the program or course

The above definitions of administrative and substantial changes are to provide guidance, however, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will make the final judgement.

Cut-off dates from 2004* for Accreditation, Reaccreditation and Changes to Programs and Courses



The great majority of information that goes to QTAC each year by this deadline is related to ongoing programs and courses. As this process is about new programs and courses, and they are not determined for the following year until September of the current year, there is provision in the QTAC guide for proposed programs and courses to be listed with an asterisk, indicating that they are proposed only and may or may not eventuate.

* Dates based on 2003 academic calendar