# Expectations of Learning and Teaching Quality in Higher Education: Implications/challenges

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# EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING QUALITY

## EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Education is publically funded and student funded.

It is deployed to produce professionals who enjoy advantages in the society

From time to time it is the focus of political debate regarding access, equity, policy, funding, workforce planning and social benefits

Employers and Professional Groups hold expectations and perceptions of the efficacy of degree programs and the readiness of graduates to enter professions and employment

Australia's employment landscape is complex, volatile and global

The notion of a degree leading to a professional appointment for life is dead

All citizens have a need to be responsive to change and to life long learning

Technology drives a need for not only capability for today but capacity to keep developing into the future.

The cost of "Human Resources" is treated in utilitarian terms and must be justified by all corporations so readiness has replaced on the job training.

In this context, institutions must be aware that they do not exist in isolation as Ivory Towers but are linked in multiple ways to stakeholders and consumers across all sectors of society.

This means that public scrutiny through government wanting accountability and productivity from its investments and user satisfaction have become key drivers of success.

The public, through the media, want transparency and comparative data

Parents and students want accurate information on which to base choices about enrolment, investment and participation

Stakeholders, such as professions and employers, want fit for purpose courses turning out appropriate numbers of graduates ready for their workplace.
The community still vests education with responsibility to transmit culture, promote social cohesion and allow for social mobility and social justice.

All of these factors drive and shape the quality agendas.  It would be naive to think that the agendas are only constructs of government or the HE sector or institution. They reflect a complex array of aspirations, expectations and fears held in the broader community.

Higher Education remains an opportunity for the Australian nation to articulate and identify its values, to underpin innovation and identity, to build social capital locally, by sector and nationally and to promote citizens who enjoy productive and healthy lives.

These possibilities and responsibilities have embedded in them real responsibilities for accountability and participation.

**Expectations of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Quality in Australia**

*Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency* (TEQSA) - independent national regulator of Australian higher education sector.

"**We aim to create a smarter future for Australia - by upholding standards for students.**"

http://www.teqsa.gov.au/

Australia has a comprehensive accountability system for HEI.
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency is Australia's independent national regulator of the HE Sector.
TEQSA takes a risk and standards approach to the HE Sector, it recognises the diversity in the sector.
It uses three principles: regulatory necessity; reflecting risk; and proportionate regulation.
This approach varies depending on the level of risk in the institution and there is differentiation according to the track record, risk of failure or risk of non compliance.

**Expectations of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Quality in Australia**

The Higher Education Standards (HES) Framework:
From 1 January 2017, "… all registered providers of higher education in or from Australia **must meet and continue to meet the requirements of the new HES Framework**."

http://www.teqsa.gov.au/teqsa-contextual-overview-hes-framework

The HES  Framework contains Domains which cover the activities of a HEI.
The First Domain (Student Participation and Attainment) covers education related experiences of students following the student life cycle.
The other Domains focus on the actions taken to support educational outcomes for students for example the second Domain  Learning Environment  covers the quality and nature of the learning environment, physical, on or off campus, virtual or blended.
The Domains are clear in the standard and in their entirety, they cover pretty much all the activity in a HEI across the student lifecycle and experience, through the learning and teaching, environments, administration and governance.
They provide some assurance that all HEI are meeting satisfactory quality indicators.

**Expectations of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Quality Internationally**

- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in UK
  - "We are … the independent body entrusted with **monitoring, and advising on, standards and quality** in UK higher education." (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/home)

- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
  - "**We invest on behalf of students and the public** to promote excellence and innovation …" (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/about/role/ )

- Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
  - "**We focus** our funding of colleges and universities, and our actions, **on achieving improved outcomes**…" (http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Priorities.aspx)

Australia is not alone in developing frameworks and working toward measures of quality compliance.  Similar schemes exist in the UK.

**Expectations of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Quality Internationally**

Colleges and Universities in Canada and USA:

- In Canada, most higher education institutions are funded by Provinces and Territories; Federal funding is for scholarships and grants.
- In USA, State funding is mainly given to public institutions; Federal funding is given to both public and private institutions, in the form of scholarships and grants.
- Each institution determines its own quality assurance standards and procedures. There are expectations of quality for degrees, etc.

Canada and The USA have not adopted centralised systems but do encourage institutions to adopt measures themselves. Market pressure in a largely full fee environment is also a strong driver of transparency around quality. The funding government mechanisms are less influential as the reliance on private funding is greater.

**Expectations of Courses/Programs**

- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
  http://www.aqf.edu.au/

- Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework
  *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*
  http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/95/QA-Statement-2007.en.pdf

- European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
  https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page

- Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies
  http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf)

Over the last two decades we have seen a proliferation of HEI and courses. Traditional degree and higher degree studies have given way to dual degrees, increases in Masters by Course and Higher Degree Research program.  Pre degree courses and Associate Diplomas, Degrees and Certificates have developed.
Again driven by a need for Quality Assurance and comparability  Qualifications Frameworks have been developed to ensure that consumers and employers can have confidence and information about qualifications.
The AQF is a national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian Education and Training.  It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.  It was introduced in 1995.
One of its purposes is to contribute to national economic performance by supporting contemporary, relevant, and nationally consistent qualification outcomes which build confidence in qualifications.
It supports pathways in learning, life long learning goals allowing for Recognition of Prior Learning and underpins regulatory and quality assurance arrangements
It is important in supporting national and international mobility of graduates and workers through increased recognition of the value and comparability of qualifications
It enables alignment with international qualifications frameworks.

**ACHIEVING
LEARNING AND TEACHING QUALITY**

Meeting standards provides public confidence in the sector but does not necessarily ensure quality in a particular HEI.
Achieving Learning and Teaching Quality takes a whole of institution approach. Everybody needs to buy in. The HES are good because they demonstrate how the parts come to form the whole. Building and Facilities, Technology, Safety on Campus and Learning Support and Libraries join Faculty in delivering quality experiences for students, staff and the community.

It could be said that we have an age of pragmatism rather than idealism in education. I hope a more accurate description is that to reach the ideals of transformative education, we need to be focussed, collaborative and practical.

**Challenges for meeting expectations of Higher Education Learning and Teaching – Leadership perspective**

- Planning for viability in competitive markets.
- Interpreting and applying national standards and criteria to the institutional context.
- Resourcing for compliance and excellence.
- Supporting staff and students to build alignment, meaning and purpose.

A HEI has to be nimble and responsive to its market. People talk about the corporatisation of HE as if it is a disease. Good business support is essential to success whether it is marketing, finance, HR or the technology partner. We are way past the days of thinking that good governance of a university stands outside regular good corporate governance. That said the reason a university exists is to create and teach knowledge and skills. It mission and purpose needs to stay firm around its raison d'etre.

There are many frameworks, compliance measures and standards, we need to internalise these and socialise them in the institution. This requires nimble systems and processes and the alignment of all staff to the critical processes. Resourcing is essential. There is no doubt that compliance and good governance costs money and time but it can also become part of the way we do business in a culture that is collegial, collaborative, compliant and purposeful in seeking excellence.

Universities are awash in data!  We benchmark, we have a toes in data analytics, fight media representations of our data and we manipulate it for marketing.  Data is a dark science but has the potential to drive continuous improvement, increased individualisation of the student experience and a shared and aligned purpose in moving toward excellence.

Communication across complex and devolved institutions is a challenge.  People have multiple purposes and getting and maintaining their attention for QA is difficult and relentless. For this reason it needs to be embedded in the culture.

Stakeholder participation is critical and requires sophisticated business systems and multilayered efforts.

Data in an organisation requires some discipline and needs to be governed by principles of reliability, timeliness, suitability for purpose, security, subsidiarity and transparency.

Data provides evidence for a professional conversation and this needs to be conducted and informal by those closest to the experiences the data represents.

**Articulate a Vision for Learning and Teaching that inspires and promotes participation and excellence**

From institutional oversight to individual responsibilities

- Develop and implement Regulations, Frameworks, Policies, Procedures, Codes of Conduct, etc.

- Plan, construct and/or provide learning and teaching spaces, amenities and facilities; teaching support to staff; and learning support to student; other forms of support to staff and students.

- Maintain records, enable appeals and complaints, etc.

- Seek and use student and staff feedback.

- Recognise and reward staff and student achievements.

Institutions are made up of individuals who form teams and groups. They are essential to quality. Mostly they desire a meaningful contribution and support for achieving excellence. The institution needs their commitment to the Vision, alignment with processes and high quality professional practice whatever their role.

This is best supported by an organisational culture that is student focussed, collaborative, clearly mission focusses and results driven. It needs to be supported by adequate and equitable resourcing, good business systems, reliable government policy and funding and a strong partnership with its community.

Data collection involves a significant and growing investment for the institution. Its use is critical to quality and success. It represents the trust between the Commonwealth and HEI, HEI and their students and staff.

Discrimination and targeting of data is critical but a data dump has little positive impact. Essential and emerging roles are evolving around analysis, communication and strategy using data in global and more granular forms.

Important in this process is a multi disciplinary approach that recognises and supports the role of the Academic Teacher. Data must remain part of teacher reflection and action research.

Data analysed and distributed but isolated from practising teachers becomes counter

productive and frequently destructive. League Tables or KPIs without content and practitioner input lacks the capacity to drive inspired practice. They also risk deskilling educators and reducing curriculum and learning to limited opportunities for training rather than transformative opportunities to embrace life long learning.

For these reasons, ACU adopts an institutional framework, led by the Academic Board, across faculties supported by the LTC and OPSM and reported against the ACU Strategic Plan.

The principle of subsidiarity applies to the cascade of data within the organisation granulated to the appropriate levels where operational and strategic discussions can be made. This Campus Data drives local communities and stakeholder partnerships, school and unit data drives teaching and support teams and individualised data drives career development, scholarship and progression.

**Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching** ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
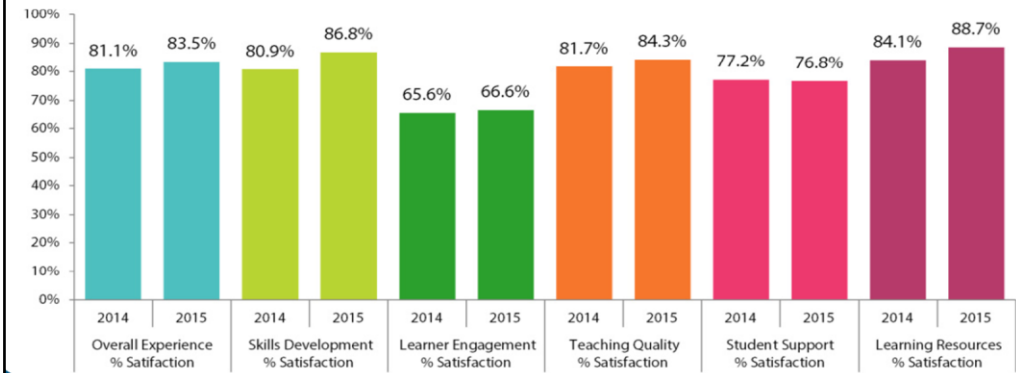
HOTSPOTS

Identifying:

- Units of Study with low student satisfaction
- Empowering teaching teams to investigate and improve practice

At ACU, we use data to:
- Inform institutional, strategic decisions and provide accountability against the Strategic Plan.
- Assist operational units such as faculties or directorates to plan and inform priorities.
- Schools and support services to identify areas where additional resources or programming is required. Hot Spots is one example of this use.
- Allow individuals to monitor and evidence their performance as part of continuous improvement, professional development and career progression.

**From institutional oversight to individual responsibilities**

Individual responsibilities:

Commit to contribution to the Mission and Purpose of the Institution

- Work in collaboration across the institution.

- Know and or apply - Regulations, Frameworks, Policies, Procedures, Codes of Conduct, etc.

- Effectively use University processes, facilities and other available support.

- Raise concerns when necessary through appropriate channels.

- Provide good quality work and aim for achieving excellence.

- Celebrate success.

Aligning individual activity to the institutional strategy is critical. An institution is only as good as its people. They inspire and animate the experiences that data represents.
Data currency, ownership and literacy is critical to all roles. Some roles have additional responsibility for data leadership.

**Student views – One source for evidencing L&T quality**

External (benchmarking) surveys:

- **University Experience Survey** (UES) – For current students
- **Course Experience Questionnaire** (CEQ) and Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) – For recent graduates
- **Graduate Destination Survey** (GDS) - For recent graduates
- **Australian Graduate Survey** (AGS) – For recent graduates, within six months of completing their degree program. AGS replaces GDS, CEQ and PREQ

Student Feedback is essential to Quality.  It needs to be in different forms and have strong feedback loops.

As HEI are as good as their staff, they do not exist without their students. Education goes beyond satisfaction. We all remember learning experiences we hated, but came to value them a decade within our career. In an age of instant gratification and constant stimulation, we need to separate enjoyment or comfort from satisfaction with rich learning that often causes some dissonance with the known. For this reason, student satisfaction data, critical as it is, needs to be triangulated with professional stakeholder perceptions and educator perceptions.

**Student views - One source for evidencing L&T quality**

External (benchmarking) surveys:

- Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) – Replace AGS
- Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS) – 3 years after graduation Graduate Outcomes Survey - Longitudinal (GOS-L) – New survey for 3 years after completion of degree program
- Student Barometer (SB)/ International Student Barometer (ISB) surveys
- *Respect.Now.Always* survey

There are short term leasings but we also need to be attentive to the longer term view. To contextualise the data and to ensure it is fit for purpose in discussion making processes.

**Student views - One source for evidencing L&T quality**

ACU Internal surveys:

- Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (SELT) survey.
- Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) survey.
- ACU Living and Learning Communities survey (for residents of ACU owned or managed student accommodation).
- Feedback from users of student services (e.g. Library, Counselling, Academic Skills, Career Development).
- ACU Branding Exercise.

For this reason, ACU uses a comprehensive set of data collection methods.

The challenge is to analyse segment, disseminate and apply the data across the institution in ways that enhance quality through enabling people to make more sophisticated and timely choices and to increasingly personalise the experience for students.
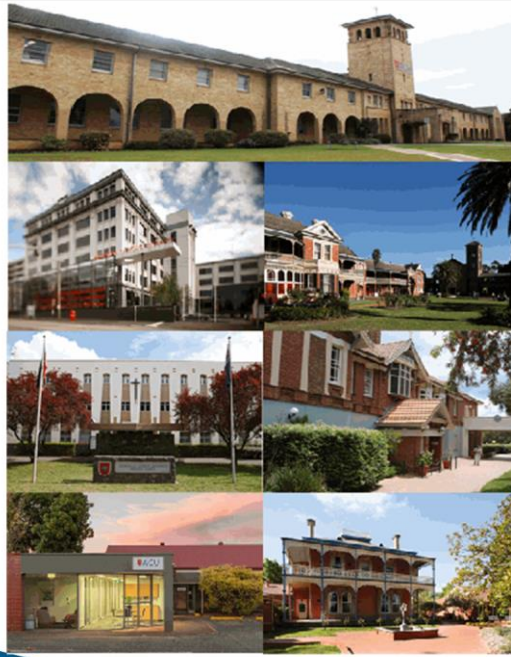
To achieve this, HEI need to work closely with internal and external technology partners and your contributor here today are building that scope for us.
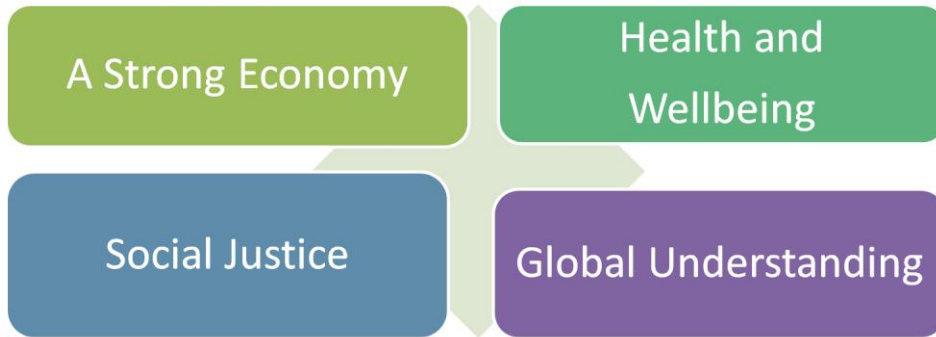
And helping us to engage Australia in quality HE that builds the health and wellbeing of individuals, a strong economy, a more just society and global understanding. Thank you.

ACU
campuses