QUALITY ASSURANCE IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: RMIT UNIVERSITY AS AN EXAMPLE

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Defining Quality (in QM)

- **Quality**: the ability of a product (a good or a service) to consistently meet or exceed customer expectations
- **Ability**: the competence, either native or acquired, that enables one to do something well
- **Consistently**: refers to a reliable or steady pattern of performance
- **Expectations**: a state of anticipation about a future outcome
Quality Management Philosophy

Malcolm Baldrige
National Quality Award

• This award was created by the US government in 1987 to help improve the quality and competitiveness of American companies by recognizing the highest-performing organizations in the manufacturing, service, healthcare, education, and small-business categories.
ISO 9000 and ISO 14000

- ISO 9000: standard created to certify companies based on their adherence to quality management principles
- ISO 14000: developed to certify companies based on their commitment to environmental quality management

Teachings of Quality Gurus

- W. Edwards Deming
  - considered the father of modern quality management.
- He emphasized the philosophy of continuous improvement: that the quest for quality is a never-ending journey.
- Deming summarizes it with: *Plan, Do, Check and Act.*
Philip Crosby

• Most widely known for his easy-to-read management book: *Quality Is Free*.
• He proposed that if management does not create a system in which zero defects are the objective, then employees are not to blame when things go wrong and defects occur.
• The benefit? A dramatic decrease in wasted resources and time spent producing goods that consumers do not want.

Philip Crosby

Defined quality as containing four absolutes:

1. Quality is defined as conformance to requirements.
2. The system for causing quality is prevention, not appraisal.
3. The performance standard must be zero defects.
4. The measurement of quality is the price of nonconformance, not indices.
Armand Feigenbaum

• Author of a book on quality control published in 1951.
• He developed the concept of total quality control (TQC), which later evolved as part of total quality management (TQM).
• Feigenbaum believed that the management of a company must always strive for quality excellence.

Kaoru Ishikawa

• Created a cause and effect diagram to find the root cause of process imperfections.
• Explored and popularized the concept of quality circles—a small group of employees who are responsible for similar or related work functions.
Joseph M. Juran

- Wrote *Quality Control Handbook*: a reference work for quality engineers.
- Revolutionized the Japanese practice of quality management and helped shape that country’s economy into an industrial leader.
- One of the first to incorporate the human aspect of quality management.

Quality Planning

Includes activities such as:

- identifying the customer.
- determining customer needs.
- translating customer needs into production language.
- Optimizing product features to meet customer needs.
Quality Assurance (in HE) Definition

Harvey and Knight (1996) identify the following meanings:
* quality as *exceptional*, i.e., exceptionally high standards of academic achievement;
* quality as *perfection* (or consistency), which focuses on processes and their specifications and is related to zero defects and quality culture;
* quality as *fitness for purpose*, which judges the quality of a product or service in terms of the extent to which its stated purpose—defined either as meeting customer specifications or conformity with the institutional mission—is met;
* quality as *value for money*, which assesses quality in terms of return on investment or expenditure and is related to accountability; and
* quality as *transformation*, which defines quality as a process of qualitative change with emphasis on adding value to students and empowering them.

Quality Assurance (in HE) Definition

Bogue (1998) highlights the following three “perspectives” on quality common to institutions of higher education:
* **limited supply**, often used in institutional rankings such as Macleans;
* **quality within mission**, defined as “fitness for purpose”; and
* **value-added, or quality in results**, defined by Astin (1985, cited in Bogue, 1998, p. 9) as the impact “on the student’s knowledge and personal development and on the faculty member’s scholarly and pedagogical ability and productivity”.

http://repository.widyatama.ac.id
Quality Assurance in Australian Higher Education Context

Improving Quality in Australian Higher Education

- In March 2000, the former Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed an independent audit body to strengthen the quality assurance framework for higher education in Australia.
- The Australian Universities Quality Agency was established in early 2000. AUQA was responsible for auditing the quality of Australian universities. AUQA conducted audits of the activities of Australian universities in Australia and off-shore on a five year rolling cycle. The process involved a self-assessment and a site visit. Audit reports contained commendations, affirmations and recommendations for universities to act upon.
- The Review of Australian Higher Education (the Bradley Review) recommended an independent national regulatory body be responsible for regulating all types of tertiary education. The Review team reasoned that a national approach would provide a more effective, streamlined and integrated sector, achieving a sustainable and responsible higher education system in the larger, more diverse and demand driven environment.
- In 2012 the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), the national regulator for higher education was established.
- The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 established the agency and the new national regulatory and quality assurance environment for Australian higher education.

SOURCE:
The role and functions of TEQSA

- The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) regulates and assures the quality of Australia’s large, diverse and complex higher education sector. The higher education sector in total employs over 107,000 people in Australia and in 2009 had close to $19.9 billion in total revenue. The Australian higher education system comprises both public and private universities, Australian branches of overseas universities, and other higher education providers with and without self-accrediting authority. Qualifications available from higher education providers range from undergraduate awards, (bachelor degrees, associate degrees or advanced diplomas) to postgraduate awards, including graduate diplomas, masters degrees and doctoral degrees.

TEQSA (cont)

- TEQSA registers and assesses the performance of higher education providers against the Higher Education Standards Framework. The Standards Framework comprises five domains: Provider Standards, Qualification Standards, Teaching and Learning Standards, Information Standards and Research Standards. The Provider Standards and Qualifications Standards are collectively the Threshold Standards, which all providers must meet in order to enter and remain within Australia’s higher education system.

- TEQSA will undertake both compliance assessments and quality assessments. Compliance assessments involve assessing a particular provider’s compliance against the Threshold Standards for registration as a higher education provider. TEQSA may conduct quality assessments across the whole higher education sector, a sample of providers, or a single provider.
University’s ADRI framework

- Organisational quality assurance processes provide robust assurance that standards are being met. Quality enhancement builds upon quality assurance processes requiring planned changes to incrementally improve or enhance the quality of our student’s learning experience.

- An enhancement led approach uses as its basis the model described in the Business Excellence Framework and adopted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA); (AQUA was superseded by TEQSA in 2011); Approach, Deployment, Results and Improvement (ADRI) (see diagram below).

- The model, when applied to any University activity, supports a systematic and continuous cycle of improvement. Quality enhancement is encompassed within each dimension through structures, processes and planned activities that encourage the continuation of this cycle. For example, the University planning process is the driver for the development and implementation of faculty and divisional strategies and the measure of results against targets. At an individual level each academic staff member can review and change practice to enhance the learning experience of their students.

University’s ADRI framework

**Approach Deployment Results Improvement (ADRI)**

- What are we trying to do? (approach)
  - What are our objectives?
  - How were these objectives arrived at?
  - How well do stakeholders understand them?
  - Are they still appropriate, given the current context and the university’s strategic directions?
- What have we actually done? (deployment)
  - How effective is this action? How do we know?
  - How consistent are our processes?
  - Do we have the resources for the action to be effective? Is more needed?
  - What training is in place?
  - What happens if processes are not followed?
- What happened? (results)
  - What information do we have about outcomes or impact?
  - Who knows about it? How is this information shared?
  - How do our results compare with others (do we benchmark)?
- What improvement is needed? (improvement)
  - What improvements have we made already?
  - What improvements do we intend to make?

Source: http://www.rmit.edu.au/browsingID=421weflidyg

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**RMIT’s ADRI Framework**

**Teaching and learning**

- Entry and demand characteristics, current and projected
- New programs planned for development
- Staff support and development initiatives to enhance teaching practices
- Current program offerings (noting those that are being discontinued, renewed)
- Evidence of rationalisation or consolidation of offerings
- Work-integrated learning initiatives
- Flexible delivery and on-line initiatives within the School
- Teaching incentives for staff (including recipients of Teaching Awards, grants)
- Overview of program teams – how they operate, support provided within School
- [TAFE areas] *Strategies for engaging industry in validation of assessment, program development
- Number of staff with teaching qualifications and strategies to increase this
- [TAFE areas] *Module load completion rate, *program completion rate
RMIT’s ADRI Framework (2)

- Evidence of effective student learning
- Processes in place to monitor offshore offerings, evidence of equivalence of academic standards: areas of confidence or concern
- Processes to maintain standards of assessment
- Results of Program Annual Reviews
- Results of external accreditation reviews
- Processes in place to review programs and courses, and changes made as a result
- Innovations in curriculum design
- Evidence of research informing teaching practice
- Initiatives in place to work collaboratively across other schools and portfolios (e.g., double degrees, dual awards, service teaching, course sharing)
- Use of Program Advisory Committees, evidence of effectiveness and impact
- Relationship with Professional Associations

RMIT’s ADRI Framework (3)

Research and research training [not relevant to TAFE schools]
- Incentives for staff to research
- Distribution of research load amongst staff
- Breadth of school's research activities, areas of strength
- School processes to support and encourage submission of competitive grant applications
- Supervisor training and development
- HDR support processes
- Part-time research student support (e.g., practice-based research)
- Links to Research Centres
- Industry or partnered research and research collaborations
- Publications — including # of staff who are research active, trends, support for research publications
- Research impact (on region, industry, practice)
- Grants won and income generated from research within the School
- Research completions
- Research consultancies
- Commercialisation initiatives
RMIT’s ADRI Framework (4)

The student experience and outcomes
- Strategies to improve the access and participation of student equity groups (e.g. scholarships)
- Student orientation and transition processes
- Processes to identify students at risk, transition support needs
- Support (e.g. mentoring) for differing cohorts of students (e.g. on-shore international students, PG students, part-time students, apprentices)
- Communication to students of support services available
- Promotional material for prospective and new students, marketing strategies in place
- Enrolment processes
- Student pathways and articulation arrangements and processes (including RPL and credit transfer)
- Alumni activities
- Arrangements for work integrated learning – extent, issues, effectiveness
- Complaints and grievance processes within the School (impact, effectiveness)
- Evidence of student satisfaction & areas of concern to students – any differences by program, site
- Feedback from employers [in TAFE, include *employers of apprentices and trainees]
- Graduate employment prospects – any differences by program, site

RMIT’s ADRI Framework (5)

Student feedback
- Student feedback processes used (e.g. UG, PG, HDR, onshore international, offshore), and sample sizes captured
- Outcomes and impact of student feedback, including CEO, GDS (any differences by program, site; *TAFE student and client feedback)
- Communication of outcomes and actions taken as a result of student feedback
- Impact of Staff Student Consultative Committees
Program Coordination, HE Accountabilities

Key HE program coordination accountabilities:

1. Ensuring that the performance targets, including equity and articulation targets, of a program offering are achieved.
2. Ensuring the successful implementation of program related strategies, processes and procedures developed by the Program Team and/or Program Leader. This involves:
   - Keeping the program log and program performance data updated.
   - Participating in the program team’s review of, and reflection on, the program’s performance measures and stakeholder feedback.
   - The implementation of action plans for program improvement.
   - Providing input into the Program Annual Report.
3. Liaising with course coordinators teaching into the program offering to ensure that student course guides are available to students by the university deadlines.
4. Managing the stakeholder relationships for a program offering.
5. Acting as a student advisor and being available as the initial contact for all student related matters for the program offering.

Program Coordination, HE Accountabilities (2)

6. Ensuring that the program brochure is updated in line with the information relevant to the award.
7. Managing the following processes as they relate to the area of responsibility of this role: Student selection including selection from equity groups; student transfers; Exemptions/RPL; Student progress/special consideration; graduation.
8. Ensuring that the staff student consultative committee exists and operates in line with university policy and procedures.
9. Liaising with students groups enrolled in program with a view to determining their particular needs and difficulties and to ensure quality outcomes for these students.
10. Managing student complaints around program-related issues.
11. Providing appropriate advice on program related issues.
Course Coordination, HE Accountabilities

1. Developing course curriculum
2. Liaising with designated library and Learning Skills Unit staff around improving and supporting student learning
3. Preparing, updating +/ or the coordinating course resource material.
4. Preparing and maintaining the course guide Part A that identifies the capabilities that are to be developed in the course and how these link to the learning experiences, expected learning outcomes and assessment tasks.
5. Checking that all copyright requirements associated with the course, have been met
6. Updating the Course Guide and Coordinating the course learning experiences.
7. Ensuring the consistency between Course Guides Part B: Course Details for the same course offered in multiple locations +/or modes of delivery.
8. Ensuring the consistency of targeted learning outcomes for students undertaking the same course regardless of geographic location or mode of delivery.
9. Ensuring that assessment moderation and validation is being undertaken in line with RMIT policy and procedures
10. Implementing strategies to minimise plagiarism.
11. Coordinating the course team (if applicable) and ensuring that all courses, regardless of location and mode of delivery, are being reviewed and improved in the light of course level feedback as well as other measures of course quality.
12. Ensuring that a record is kept of the course review and improvement Implementation.
13. Coordinating all student-related course matters such as: Consultation with students; Marking and assessment; Collation of assessment results and Student feedback

Program Annual Review

The purpose of Program Annual Review (PAR) is to provide a systematic review of program quality, relevance and viability that attests to the educational design, implementation and currency of RMIT programs and informs school, portfolio and university planning.

The PAR process is an important contributor to RMIT University’s annual planning activity. It provides a formal process to review individual program performance at the School, College and University levels. The process provides important outcomes that inform business and work plans of program teams, schools, colleges and the University:

1. The first set of outcomes is a detailed review of program performance against the university’s quality, viability, relevance and strategic alignment settings and an associated action plan.
2. The second set of outcomes relate to the future development plans for disciplines, programs and profile with reference to University globalisation, urban, industry partnering and high impact area foci.
3. The final set of outcomes is an understanding of what the colleges and the university need to do to effectively support program development, delivery and the student experience.

*The process helps to shape profile and therefore, budget decisions.

*The PAR applies to all RMIT award coursework programs, onshore, offshore and all modes of delivery, whether offered directly by RMIT University or in partnership with other providers.

Source:
References

- http://www.mht.edu.au/browse/12s=21633029

+ Thank you very much indeed
+ Any questions/comments/feedback